EFFECTIVE LITERACY INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES IN HIGH ACADEMIC GROWTH CLASSROOMS

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

BY

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MUNCIE, INDIANA

DECEMBER 2017

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While there are books written and classes taught about the journey of a dissertation, none truly prepare you for the reality of what it is like. I had many stops and starts on my journey, and left to my own devices would not be at this point today. It took a supporting team of many to help me get to this point. Not all of the support was in the form of academic guidance. Some support was the hard nose push that it took to get me past the proposal stage. Other support was through the taking on of tasks that made all aspects of my life run smoothly. And finally, the belief in my ability to conquer this journey was the biggest support of all. For all of this, I am thankful.

Heartfelt thanks to Dr. Serena Salloum. Your support and encouragement from my very first doctorate class to the final review of my dissertation is so greatly appreciated. I have learned so much from you, and I am thankful for all of the time you have invested in me.

To Dr. Marilynn Quick for her ability to know when her guiding hand was needed to push me past the road block I had constructed and back on the road to completion.

To my parents, Larry and Julie Stevens - from the time I was young, you always made me believe I could accomplish anything. Thanks for always expecting me to always be an honor roll kid and for always being honor roll parents. (I am still trying to figure out how to be on the honor roll in conduct, but that may be a losing battle.)

To Rosemary Jessup for her love of all things to do with education. You supported my return to school for my master's degree and that support continued when I decided to pursue my doctorate. Oh, how I wish you were here to see this, I know you would be so proud!

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the greatest loves of my life – Dave and Faye. Your love, support, and unwavering belief that I could do this helped me more than you will ever know.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There are many factors which have an impact on student achievement—curricular materials, level of family support, the students themselves, and teachers—to name a few. Some of these factors are outside of the purview of schools and others are the result of the interaction between students, teachers, and instructional materials in environments (Cohen, Raudenbush, & Ball, 2003). Environments encompass a wide variety of influences on instruction. They include where instruction occurs, external influence such as economic and social differences, and internal influences such as district and principal expectations. In the Coleman report from the late 1960s, it was suggested that the greatest impact on student achievement comes from the influences outside of school—socioeconomic status (SES), parental support for education, and pre-school experience (or lack of). In other words, the impact schools make is less than the impact the family makes. In the 50 years since the Coleman report was issued, study after study has been conducted with the aim to prove or disprove the findings of the Coleman report. At the 40-year mark of the report's release, the Coleman report had been cited in more than 2,700 academic journals (Gamoran & Long, 2006). Nye, Konstantopoulous, and Hedges (2004) stated that the Coleman report was, "widely, and incorrectly, interpreted as indicating that schools and teachers made little difference in student achievement" (p. 238).

In direct contrast to the Coleman report, studies conducted in Tennessee and Texas suggested that for students in classrooms with effective teachers, patterns of higher achievement emerge. In the Tennessee study conducted by Sanders and Rivers (1996), students placed with the most effective teachers gained almost 40 percentile points over the course of a school year compared to students with similar abilities placed with the least effective teachers. In Texas, the

long term effects of teachers on student achievement was the focus of the study. This study by Jordan, Mendro, and Weersinghe (1997) placed students in a three-year pattern with either highly-effective or ineffective teachers. The difference after the three-year study showed a gain from the 59th percentile to the 76th percentile for those students who spent three consecutive years with highly-effective teachers. In contrast, those students who spent three years with ineffective teachers showed a decrease in performance from the 60th percentile to the 42nd percentile. When considering that these students started at roughly the same place, with regard to reading achievement, the results of this study were very compelling. This study demonstrated that teacher quality and effectiveness have a profound impact on student achievement. If a school district does not have effective teachers, a negative impact on student achievement can occur. For this reason, it is important to ensure that teachers are effective in their instructional delivery. In a report by McKinsey and Company (2007), it was reported that primary students face a largely irreversible educational loss if they are placed with low-performing teachers several years in a row.

There are many factors that could be considered when making recommendations for instruction, teacher performance, and student achievement. Understanding how teachers whose students demonstrate high growth in reading employ a variety of instructional strategies was the purpose of my study.

Statement of the Problem

Teachers need to have a better understanding of which instructional strategies are used in classrooms where students demonstrate high growth in reading achievement. Research has shown that teacher effectiveness is important to student success (Jordan et al., 1997; McKinsey & Company, 2007; Sanders & Rivers, 1996), but the understanding of how to guide the

instruction within those teachers' classrooms seems to be the next step in helping students achieve even more.

Purpose of the Study

One purpose of this study was to describe which instructional strategies and foundational components are the most prevalent and at a higher level of instructional quality in classrooms where the teachers have realized achievement growth at least one standard deviation above the mean of their grade level. The teachers who were part of this study were identified through their students' yearly growth, as measured using Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS). Another purpose was to discern whether there is a difference in the quality of the instructional strategies between those teachers rated highly effective and those rated effective. The independent variables in this study were the teachers' grade levels, years of experience, gender, achievement growth of their students, and teacher effectiveness (as measured by the Hessville School District Teacher Evaluation Tool, a modified RISE tool). The dependent variable was instructional quality (as measured by the scores on a rubric that assessed instructional strategies).

Significance of the Study

The ability to comprehend what is read and to interact with the written word is a skill necessary for all students. The website for the International Literacy Association (2015) summarized the idea that reading, writing, and communicating allows people to connect with others and the world (www.literacyworldwide.org). The instruction students receive at the elementary level helps build a foundation that will serve them throughout their educational career and their lives. It is important that students receive instruction that is meaningful, engaging, and builds upon the skills and experiences students bring with them to school (Graham

& Hebert, 2011). If the most effective instructional strategies can be identified, a thorough professional development program can be established to support current teachers as they strive to teach students in the most meaningful ways. Furthermore, these strategies could be taught to pre-service educators in a way that would enable them to become proficient prior to having their own classrooms. The pre-service teachers could fine-tune the use of these instructional strategies during their student teaching with on-going support from their cooperating teacher.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following question: Which instructional strategies are the most prevalent in the classrooms of elementary teachers with high student achievement growth? In order to answer this overarching question, there were several additional questions that when answered, provided a richer understanding of instructional strategies.

1. Which literacy instructional strategies and foundational components are used at a higher level of instructional quality?
2. How does instructional quality and frequency of these strategies and components vary depending on: grade level, class size, teachers' years of experience, and teacher effectiveness (as rated on district evaluation tool)?
3. What are the perceptions of highly effective and effective teachers in Hessville School District as they describe effective instruction in literacy?

Delimitations

All observations and interviews were conducted in the Hessville School District. Hessville School District had 25% of students receiving free or reduced lunch, and 22% of the student population were minorities. For this Midwest suburban school district, the findings of this research may be different than those found if the same study had been conducted in a rural or

urban setting. All observations took place during the scheduled 90-minute reading block. As other reading instruction may have occurred outside the 90-minute reading block, only the instruction that occurred during the official reading block was considered. The study only evaluated kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms.

Special Definitions

- **Amazing Words.** One of the vocabulary components of the Pearson Reading Street (http://www.californiareading.com/news/amazingwords.html).
- **Balanced Instruction.** The interaction between the skills-based aspects of reading and the meaning-based aspects of reading (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013).
- **Classroom Management.** Classroom rules which are used to define general expectations or standards regarding student behavior and classroom procedures are used to define behavior for specific tasks (Marzano, 2007).
- **Cooperative Learning**. "The instructional use of small groups so that students can work together to accomplish a common purpose and maximize their own and others' learning" (Bromley & Modlo, 1997, p. 22).
- **Core** (as it relates to DIBELS). Score result of the DIBELS assessment that are at or above benchmark (Dynamic Measurement Group Inc., 2010).
- **DAZE** (as it relates to DIBELS). DIBELS maze comprehension task. An assessment within DIBELS where every 7th word is left blank with a maze of options (three choices) and students need to determine which word best fits (https://dibels.org/dibels.html).

- **DIBELS.** A series of assessments developed at the University of Oregon that tests early literacy skills, acronym for Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (https://dibels.org/dibels.html).
- **Explicit Instruction.** An instructional approach with specific design and delivery procedures (Hall, 2002). Explicit instruction, also referred to as direct instruction, begins with the teacher modeling and explaining a process or concept, providing opportunity for guided practice, and allowing students the chance for independence.
- **Instruction.** The interactions between students, teachers, and instructional materials in environments (Cohen et al., 2003).
- **Intensive** (as it relates to DIBELS). Score results of the DIBELS assessment that are below benchmark and below the cut point for risk (Dynamic Measurement Group Inc., 2010).
- **Prior Knowledge.** Beliefs, life, and academic experiences that students bring to the classroom (Campbell & Campbell, 2009).
- **Race to the Top.** Part of the American Recovery and Restoration Act of 2009, Race to the Top provided, ". . .a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward States that are creating conditions for education innovation and reform" (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2009, p. 2).
- **Reading A – Z.** A component of Learning A – Z an online resource providing leveled reading selections and activities. (https://www.readinga-z.com/about-readinga-z/)
- **Reading Counts.** *Scholastic Reading Counts!* is an independent reading program for Grades K–12 which combines reading practice and software-based reading

assessment. (http://teacher.qa.scholastic.com/products/independent_reading/scholastic_reading_counts/program_overview.htm)

- **SRI (Scholastic Reading Inventory).** *Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI)* Interactive is a computer-adaptive assessment designed to measure how well students read literature and expository texts of varying difficulties. This psychometrically valid assessment instrument can be used as a diagnostic tool to place students at the best level in the program so they can read with success. (www.teacher.scholastic.com/products/product_info/.../SRI_Research%20Summary_Revised.p...)
- **Strategic** (as it relates to DIBELS). Score result of the DIBELS assessment that are below benchmark and either at or above the cut point for risk (Dynamic Measurement Group Inc., 2010).
- **Student Engagement.** Engagement depends on a teacher's ability to organize the classroom as an efficient learning environment where activities run smoothly, transitions are brief and orderly, and little time is spent getting organized or dealing with misconduct. Greater engagement often translates into higher achievement, with more advanced reading, better writing, and higher standardized test performance (Bohn, Roehrig, & Pressley, 2004).

Summary

Chapter 1 provided the purpose behind understanding which instructional strategies and foundational components are used in classrooms that demonstrate a history of high student growth. This knowledge allows for the professional development of current teachers and the training of pre-service teachers in their use. This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 2 consists of a literature review analyzing instructional strategies and foundational teaching components and their use in the elementary reading classroom. Chapter 3 describes the research

design and the methods used. Included in chapter 3 is a sample of the observation instrument, the interview questions, and a description of how participants were identified. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data collected and a discussion of the findings. Chapter 5 contains the summary and recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I review literature that informs my study. I provide a definition of instruction as the interconnectedness of teachers, students, and content. I give background information about federal and state legislation as it relates to education and teachers. Foundational teaching components and instructional strategies are described. Finally, I share common themes discovered through the literature review and potential implications for research and teaching.

Increasing student achievement is one of the many goals schools across the country seek to achieve. Providing students with effective instruction is one way to accomplish this goal. Before exploring this, it is important to understand what instruction really is. In few studies or books on the subject of education is the term instruction truly defined. Although instruction is defined in *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* as, "the action, practice, or profession of teaching," (Instruction, 1983) the vagueness of this definition tells little about the complex interaction that takes place in classrooms between teachers, students, and educational materials. The lack of a clear definition makes it difficult to then explain what constitutes highly-effective instruction.

When explaining instruction, Cohen, Raudenbush, and Ball (2003) used the term teaching in place of instruction and stated, "Teaching is what teachers do, say, and think with learners, concerning content, in particular organizations and other environments in time. Teaching is a collection of practices, including pedagogy, learning instructional design, and managing organization" (p. 124). In their research, Cohen et al. provided a visual, which shows the connectedness of students, teachers, content, and environments (Figure 1 shown below). The

interactions displayed by this figure allow an understanding of the interconnectedness required for instruction to occur.

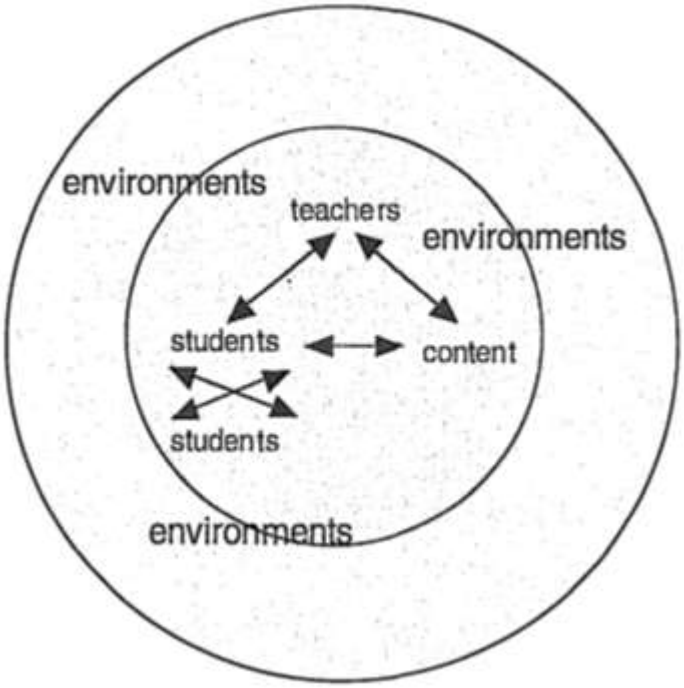

Figure 1. Instruction as interaction from Cohen at al. (2003).

Rather than trying to define highly-effective instruction, researchers discuss instructional strategies that have been found to be effective in increasing student achievement. Other researchers discuss how different types of instruction impact student learning in a variety of ways.

Marzano, Pickering, and Pollack (2001) discussed multiple categories of instructional strategies that affect student achievement. They were quick to point out, however, that ". . .no instructional strategy works equally well in all situations. . . Instructional strategies are tools only" (p. 8). Marzano et al. espouse that classroom instruction, management techniques, and curriculum design, are the three necessary components of classroom pedagogy. In studies that

were examined for this review, these components were often intertwined with one another showing how all three are necessary in effective classrooms. In the district featured in the current study, there was an expectation that the curricular materials used across the district were the same. Because the curricular materials used in classrooms were consistent, the variables were the interaction between students and teachers not the curricular materials. If a wide variety of curricular materials were used, it would be difficult to know if the achievement gains were due to teacher and student interactions or curricular materials. Although the materials may have been the same, how the teachers used the materials in their instructional practice could and do vary. Additionally, since all of the research was conducted in the same school district, the environments, which have the potential to influence the interconnectedness of instruction, were limited. The questions remain, how do teachers decide which instructional strategies to use? And which strategies were used the most effectively?

Recent Instructional Policy Changes

According to the National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ; 2013), "'effective' teaching must be rooted in academic results for students. Whatever else they [teachers] accomplish in the classroom, effective teachers must improve student achievement" (p. 1). In an international study that focused on what top school systems do differently, it found "three things that matter most: 1) getting the right people to become teachers, 2) developing them into effective instructors and, 3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child" (McKinsey & Company, 2007, p. 2).

There is an understanding that teacher quality and effectiveness is a critical component of student achievement. This understanding has led to many studies, initiatives, and programs

across districts, states, and the federal level, which analyzed evaluations of teachers and supports to improve teacher quality.

Some of the most recent programs and changes across the country required teachers to prove their effectiveness in order to continue teaching and increase their salaries. One of these programs was the federal initiative Race to the Top (USDOE, 2009). Race to the Top was part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The ARRA was, "designed to stimulate the economy, support job creation, and invest in critical sectors, including education" (USDOE, 2009, p. 2). With education named as one of the critical sectors, Race to the Top offered over $4 billion in grant funding, "a competitive grant program designed to encourage and reward States that are creating the conditions for education innovation and reform" (USDOE, 2009, p. 2).

Although Race to the Top was a multi-faceted initiative, there were actually four core educational reform areas that required applicants to "implement ambitious reform plans" (USDOE, 2009, p. 2). One of these core reform areas concentrated on how to recruit, develop, reward, and retain effective teachers and principals. This call for reform may have been the impetus states were looking for to begin to make changes to teacher evaluation and compensation.

In 2010, the USDOE (2011) developed A Blueprint for Reform as part of the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. "This blueprint builds on the significant reforms already made in response to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009" (USDOE, 2011, p. 3). One of the areas that the blueprint built upon was the idea of making sure all classrooms have an effective teacher. The blueprint stated, "The interaction between teacher and student is the primary determinant of student success. A great teacher can

make the difference between a student who achieves at high levels and a student who slips through the cracks" (USDOE, 2002, p. 13).

In 2015, the next reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act saw significant changes made to the expectations from the federal level regarding teachers. These included allowing each state to determine how test scores would be used in teacher evaluations, and provided funding for both professional development and for leadership innovation (Lisowski, 2015). It is important to remember that providing states with the ability to determine how test scores will be used, does not guarantee that test scores will or will not be used for teacher evaluations. It is up to each state to make those decisions.

This 2015 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, is more widely referred to as ESSA, Every Student Succeeds Act. There are many questions about the specific details of how ESSA will truly impact students and teachers. At the heart of the Act, there are several provisions designed to ensure success for students. Some of these provisions include:

- Protection for disadvantaged and high-need students
- Requirements that all students receive high academic standards in preparation for college and careers
- Measurement of student progress of the high academic standards through statewide assessments
- Increased access to high-quality preschool
- Maintain accountability and action to ensure positive change for all students. (https://www.ed.gov/ESSA)

Currently, there is work being done to define the impact of ESSA within each state to determine how the guidelines and requirements will fit together to meet the needs of students.

Indiana Code 20-25-13-7 stated that a "teacher's students' performance improvement levels under the assessment tests and programs of (multiple) Indiana Codes may be used as a factor, but not the only factor, to evaluate the performance of a teacher in the school city" (Rund, 2015, pp. 589-590). Because the performance of students in Indiana is tied back to the evaluation of, and therefore, the compensation of their teachers, it is important to look at strategies for increasing student achievement through the use of instructional strategies.

Doherty and Jacobs (2013) provided information about teacher evaluation and effectiveness and how these two measures were used differently across the country. Doherty and Jacobs (2013) stated:

> It is critically important that teacher "effectiveness" is defined as and tied to results for kids in our nation's schools. But evaluation for evaluation's sake isn't enough. States must connect the dots. Evaluations of teacher effectiveness need to be used to inform policy, practice and decisions of consequence in our classrooms and our schools. (p. 2)

Doherty and Jacobs (2013) stated that although new policy on teacher evaluation and effectiveness is under development, close attention should be paid on the impact these have on tenure, compensation, layoffs, dismissal, and professional development. To employees outside of education, performance had long been tied to these areas.

Doherty and Jacobs's (2013) study provided information broken down by state to outline how teacher evaluation was used. Of the states using student achievement as a factor in teacher evaluations, only five and the District of Columbia public schools tied teacher evaluation to

compensation. However, there were differences between the five states as to how much weight student achievement plays in compensation.

Teacher Compensation and Evaluation

As my research focused on teachers and instruction in Indiana, it was important to be acquainted with the changes of Indiana state laws on teacher compensation and evaluation. In Indiana, the effectiveness of a teacher's instruction and its impact on student achievement has a direct impact on the earning potential for that teacher. For that reason, and certainly many others, determining which instructional strategies, when used effectively, has the most positive impact on student achievement, has taken on a high level of importance. Indiana Code 20-28-9-1 changed the way public school teachers in Indiana are compensated (Rund, 2015). This law requires the implementation of performance-based pay through the use of teacher evaluation.

If a teacher is not rated as effective or highly effective, he or she is not eligible for salary or increment increases. Due to this new law, there is greater emphasis than ever before on what constitutes an effective teacher.

Directly related to Indiana Code 20-28-9-1 is the process which outlines how teachers in the state of Indiana are evaluated for effectiveness. The approval of Indiana Code 20-28-11.5, which went into effect on July 1, 2012, stated that all teachers in the state would be required to be evaluated each year (Rund, 2015). These evaluations must include the following components:

1. Performance evaluations for all certificated employees, conducted at least annually.
2. Objective measures of student achievement and growth to significantly inform the evaluation. The objective measures must include:

A. student assessment results from statewide assessments for certificated employees whose responsibilities include instruction in subjects measured in statewide assessments;
B. methods for assessing student growth for certificated employees who do not teach in areas measured by statewide assessments; and
C. student assessment results from locally developed assessments and other test measures for certificated employees whose responsibilities may or may not include instruction in subjects and areas measured by statewide assessments.

3. Rigorous measures of effectiveness, including observations and other performance indicators.
4. An annual designation of each certificated employee in one (1) of the following rating categories:
    A. Highly effective
    B. Effective
    C. Improvement necessary
    D. Ineffective
5. An explanation of the evaluator's recommendations for improvement, and the time in which improvement is expected.
6. A provision that a teacher who negatively affects student achievement and growth cannot receive a rating of highly effective or effective (https://iga.in.gov/).

In Hessville and across the state, effectiveness was measured through classroom walk-throughs, check lists, and formal observations, but these alone did not determine whether or not a teacher was effective. Teacher effectiveness was also measured by student achievement and

growth based on test results. Currently, there is still uncertainty on how to tie student achievement to performance for teachers who teach non-tested grades or subject areas. As Indiana works with the new guidelines of the Every Student Succeeds Act, changes may indefinitely lead to teacher evaluation laws and subsequent enactment.

As evaluations and test scores are considered, teachers should be provided with opportunities for professional development designed to help them become effective or better yet, highly effective. However, becoming an effective teacher is "not about workshops or checklists, but about deliberate practice" (Reeves, 2010, p. 147). Deliberate practice requires professional development and professional action where teachers are trained on how to effectively use instructional strategies and are supported in their implementation and ongoing use of these strategies. It is not enough for teachers to hear "once or twice" about an instructional strategy. Rather, they need to implement the strategy, be provided with feedback on their effectiveness, and understand the potential positive impact of the strategy on student achievement.

So the questions to ask could be, what is an effective teacher and what does it mean to be effective? Stronge (2002) reviewed multiple studies on effective instruction and effective teachers to help answer these questions. Through his research, Stronge demonstrated that there were multiple characteristics that make up an effective teacher. The first characteristic was the interpersonal skills of a teacher—the relationship with students, enthusiasm, and attitude toward teaching, and reflective practice. Stronge's second and third characteristics went hand in hand with one another: organization of the classroom and organization of instruction. The organization of the classroom included the ideas of classroom management and student discipline, and the organization of instruction included planning, time allocation, and teacher expectation. The final characteristic was multi-faceted, as it was implementing instruction.

Within this characteristic, Stronge (2002) held instructional strategies, content, complexity, and questioning as parts of the whole.

When seeing the definition of an effective teacher using Stronge's findings, it is easy to understand why the evaluation process of teachers has been difficult. There are many pieces of the puzzle that make up an effective or a highly-effective teacher that are difficult to see in a short walk through or even in an extended classroom observation. Interesting to note, there was no study in Stronge's (2002) work that showed test results as a measure of a teacher's effectiveness.

Selection of Instructional Strategies

After conducting my literature review, there were several instructional strategies that were featured in multiple studies focusing on literacy. After selecting these strategies for use in this study, I read the book *Visible Learning* by Hattie (2009) where an analysis of over 800 meta-analyses were compiled to show the potential impact on student learning. Many of the strategies, but not all that I selected as a result of my literature review, were featured in Hattie's meta-analyses. For the components or strategies part of Hattie's work, I have provided data compiled by Hattie in Table 1. The hinge point in the chart refers to the point at which "the effects of innovation enhance achievement in such a way that we can notice real world differences," (Hattie, 2009, p. 17). Hattie stated that any hinge points greater than $d = 0.40$ places that strategy or component in the "zone of desired effects as these are the influences that have the greatest impact on student achievement outcomes," (Hattie, 2009, p. 19). The instructional strategy in Hattie's work with the highest hinge point was in the area of formative assessment. However, I did not include formative assessment as an area to gather data in my study. In the Hessville school district, there was already evidence that formative assessments were utilized by all

teachers. Each week teachers participated in professional learning communities (PLCs) where formative data was collected, analyzed, and used to make instructional decisions for intervention, remediation, and enrichment. The formative assessments used for these discussions included both district-created and more formal measures, such as DIBELS progress monitoring data. For this reason, I did not believe collecting data about the use of formative assessments provided differentiation between teachers.

Table 1

John Hattie's Instructional Strategy Effectiveness

Strategy or Component	Hinge point *d* =	Number of meta-analyses	Number of studies
Classroom Management	0.52	1	100
Student Engagement	0.48	5	146
Cooperative Learning (Cooperative vs. Individualistic)	0.59	4	774
Explicit Instruction (Direct Instruction)	0.59	4	304
Explicit Instruction (Teacher Clarity)	0.75	1	na
Connections to Prior Knowledge (Behavioral objectives and advance organizers)	0.41	11	577
Questioning	0.46	7	211
Goal Setting	0.56	11	604
Balanced Instruction	N/A		
Coaching	N/A		
Group Size	N/A		

Effective Instruction in Elementary Literacy

With a better understanding of the changes in recent legislation that have created a focus on teacher effectiveness, teachers need to be provided with the knowledge of the very best instructional strategies that they can use to provide effective instruction to their students. "Effective teachers recognize that no single instructional strategy can be used in all situations.

Rather, they develop and call on a broad repertoire of approaches that have proved successful for them with students of varying abilities, backgrounds, and interest" (Stronge, 2002, p. 45).

It was not difficult to find studies that focused on effective teachers or effective instructional strategies. These studies were varied and either considered the impact of teachers themselves or considered the impact of instructional strategies on student achievement. For this study, I only considered the studies that were conducted during literacy blocks or focused on reading instruction at the elementary level in both general education and special education settings.

Foundational teaching components. When researching instructional strategies, I found a few teaching components that were mentioned in many studies. Although these were critical components in a highly-effective classroom, for the purpose of this study, I did not include them as instructional strategies. Although, these components can be seen as foundational to an effective classroom; they are often put into place before subject-specific instruction can take place. They include classroom management and student engagement. This base of foundational teaching components does not develop without the purposeful and repetitive work of the classroom teacher. Should a teacher not develop and utilize these components effectively in the classroom, the base begins to erode and the ability to provide meaningful instruction is limited. To be skillful at instructional strategies without having these components firmly established could limit the amount of uninterrupted class time for instruction. Maximizing time on task for students results when a strong base has been established.

Classroom management. One necessary component in a highly-effective classroom is the implementation of strong classroom management. Classroom management to beginning teachers is often viewed as the rules put in place to make students behave. More veteran

educators understand classroom management as being a two-fold concept, which consists of classroom rules and procedures. Classroom rules are used to define general expectations or standards regarding student behavior, and classroom procedures are used to define behavior for specific tasks (Marzano, 2007). For instance, a classroom rule could be that when the teacher is providing instruction, no one should get out of their seat to sharpen a pencil. A procedure might be a morning routine of coming into the classroom, hanging up coats and book bags, sharpening two pencils, and beginning morning work.

Strong classroom management is a way to increase student time on task. With more time on task, teachers have more time to provide small group or individualized instruction. Anderson, Everston, and Brophy (1979) stated, "Good classroom management that keeps students involved and prevents problems is essential if achievement gains are to occur" (p. 216). In a classroom where classroom management is very effective, "it [classroom management] is so good that there is rarely a disciplinary event and the class functions so smoothly that it is often difficult to know what the management plan is" (Bohn et al., 2004, p. 270). Conversely, in a poorly managed classroom, routines change frequently, routines are not completed, and the classrooms feel chaotic (Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998).

There is a connection between more time on task and student achievement (Troia, Lin, Cohen, & Monroe, 2011). Teachers who are highly skilled in classroom management are able to manage not only student behavior but all of the other distractions that can take time away from instruction. These teachers have the ability to manage students and resource people, time, supplies, transitions, etc. Teachers accomplish this by modeling their expectations and practicing these expectations with students. There is a relationship noted in the study by Fisher and Hiebert (1990) between classroom management and student choice. They found that

students who had influence on determining their tasks were more likely to be engaged in lessons, and were more responsible for their classroom conduct.

Student engagement. Classroom management leads to another necessary foundational teaching component of an effective classroom—student engagement. One way student engagement can be operationalized in a classroom is by observing student participation. In order to foster the participation that leads to engagement, a teacher must create an environment where students understand the expectations for participation and also create a safe space for students to be willing to answer or ask questions. In a case study by Mahiri and Maniates (2013), a first-grade teacher combined her teaching perspectives, instructional strategies, and dispositional strategies to create a learning environment that provided her students the foundation they needed to become engaged readers. Her belief that all students can learn, that she needed to create a safe environment, and that she needed to carefully structure participation were the beginning steps in creating a classroom with engaged students. Building on that foundation, the teacher then shared her expectations with students and worked with them to meet those expectations which increased their stamina for periods of learning. Finally, the teacher selected materials and student groups to be able to put all of these components together. At first glance, this sounds like a great deal of work to develop engaged learners. However, many of these strategies are not different than what most effective teachers do every day. The difference is in the deliberate nature in which all of the strategies were brought together.

When considering engagement as it relates specifically to reading, "Engaged readers are intrinsically motivated to read for a variety of personal goals, strategic in their reading behaviors, knowledgeable in their construction of new understandings from text, and socially interactive about the reading of text." (Gambrell, 2011, pp. 172-173). Gambrell provided rules for

engagement during reading which included making reading relevant to their lives, providing a wide array of reading materials to choose from, providing opportunities for interacting with others about the text students are reading, and offering incentives that demonstrate the importance of reading in the classroom.

Highly-effective teachers need to know when it is necessary to change the routine to capture a teachable moment in order to enrich a lesson (Anderson et al., 1979; Taylor, Pearson, Clark, & Walpole, 2000). They also need to organize an efficient learning environment where activities and transitions run smoothly (Brophy, 1986). Ultimately, "greater engagement often translates into higher achievement, with more advanced reading, better writing, and higher standardized test performance in classrooms where engagement is high" (Bohn et al., 2004, p. 270).

Instructional Strategies for Literacy

Instructional strategies could be seen as the specific techniques, procedures, skills, etc. used by teachers to introduce or reinforce learning. As shown in the Cohen et al. (2003) model, instructional strategies are made up of the interconnectedness of the relationships between teachers and content, teachers and students, and how teachers facilitate the relationship between students and content. There are infinite instructional strategies that can be utilized in the classroom. Teachers may find instructional strategies that are effective with one group of students may not be as effective with another group. Through my review of literature, a small select group of instructional strategies have been studied repeatedly. Although most of these strategies could be appropriately used in content area other than reading, at least one, balanced instruction, was developed as a merging of two instructional strategies used specifically for

reading. It is important to understand what each strategy looks like in the classroom and the potential impact it can have on student achievement when effectively implemented.

Explicit instruction. Explicit instruction is an instructional approach with specific design and delivery procedures (Hall, 2002). Explicit instruction, also referred to as direct instruction, should begin with the teacher modeling and explaining a process or concept, providing opportunity for guided practice, and finally allowing students the chance for independence. This can be explained to students by using the language: I do (teacher), we do (teacher and students), and you do (students). The teacher begins by modeling, students practice with the guidance and support of the teacher, and then the student works independently. For instance, in order to answer a comprehension question requiring the reader to infer, a teacher using explicit instruction takes students through their thought process step by step. It would be the goal of the teacher to make this strategy conspicuous. There should be no mystery behind the thought process used to answer a question. For this type of instruction to be effective, it is necessary to ensure student participation through discussion. Explicit instruction provides students with clear expectations and directions; it includes modeling of thought process and problem solving. It provides students with opportunities to see skills broken down step by step and allows students to apply these skills in meaningful ways. Although there have been some mixed results as to whether or not explicit instruction has a positive or negative impact on achievement, the majority of studies show explicit instruction as having a positive impact on student achievement (Instruction, 2011). However, there are studies which also find explicit instruction as having a possible negative impact on achievement. This negative impact on student achievement can be seen when explicit instruction is used exclusively for instruction. Students, who receive explicit detailed instruction on how to decode words without ever using

the skill when reading a sentence, are less likely to understand how decoding is used in reading. For the potential negative impact of skills, only explicit instruction has caused teachers to look for ways of connecting skills learning to meaning-based learning. This combination of skills and meaning-based instruction led to the awareness and use of balanced instruction, an instructional strategy discussed later in this review. Students, who are asked questions which explicitly examine one piece of literature without providing connection between other pieces of literature, miss out on the relationship between topics and themes (Block, Cleveland, Parris, Reed, & Whiteley, 2009; Pressley, 1997).

Positive impacts of explicit instruction are seen in classrooms where the strategy is used effectively. Teachers in these classrooms often use a list of skills which students must learn. These lists could be state standards, common core standards, district standards, or teacher-created lists and are often introduced to students through explicit instruction. McLaughlin (2012) stated explicit instruction should be conducted within a framework which "gradually releases responsibility" (p. 435) to students. This framework begins with explanation, demonstration, guidance, practice, and reflection. Teachers explained why students needed to learn a concept; the teacher demonstrated how to master the concept by breaking the concept down to its key components (Boyles, 2002). This type of instruction requires teachers to model their thought processes and provide guidelines for solving problems or mastering new concepts. Teachers, who use this strategy effectively, also allowed time for students to practice these concepts; and this allowed teachers the time to monitor student progress and provide feedback on student performance. In some situations, teachers need to adjust upcoming lessons based on student areas of need as discovered during monitoring of independent work time (Anderson et

al., 1979; McCutchen, Abbott, Green, Beretvas, Cox, Potter, Quiroga & Gray, 2002; Topping & Ferguson, 2005; Wharton et al., 1998; Wray, Medwell, Fox, & Poulson, 2000).

Connections to prior knowledge. Another instructional strategy, which is important for student achievement in literacy, is connecting new learning with prior or background knowledge. Background knowledge has a "profound effect on what learners can make sense of and what they cannot," (Reeves, 2011, p. 162). When working to understand text, students bring their own "worldview and knowledge about a topic depending on his or her prior experiences, culture, and language," (Bui & Fagan, p. 60). The use of their own viewpoint allows students to make connections between what they know and what they are reading and trying to understand which allow them to connect what they have read to their own lives.

Schemata theory stated that a reader can better comprehend new material when they use prior knowledge (Farstrup & Samuels, 2002). Schema is a reader's organized knowledge of the world.

> The reader's schema provides a basis to (a) assimilate text information, (b) make inferences to fill gaps in meaning, (c) prioritize the importance of text elements, (d) search memory in an orderly fashion, (e) summarize information, and (f) recall and/or reconstruct the essential meaning of the text at later dates. (Block et al., 2009, p. 263)

Students make connections and see relationships between new concepts and ideas with what they already know. Teachers, who are effective in the use of this strategy, model by making a personal connection to a book, a text to text connection, or a text to world connection. Andreassen & Braten (2011) found that teachers needed to be deliberate with the activation of student background knowledge. Teachers can do this through a variety of ways that include

encouraging different points of views, asking why questions rather than who, what, and when questions, and modeling their own thinking. This strategy, like the others in this study, must be part of a deliberate act of the teacher to incorporate this strategy into meaningful learning and connections for students.

Questioning. Effective questioning provides students with structure for answers, wait or think time to develop an appropriate response, and support when the student does not know the answer. The instructional aspect of questioning is multi-faceted. A teacher needs to determine the type of question or questions they will ask—will it be lower-level questions, knowledge and comprehension, higher-level questions, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation, or a mixture of both? How long should the teacher wait between question and response? How should the teacher respond to the answer—a correct answer, an incorrect answer, or no answer? As it is difficult to develop higher-level questions on the spot, even when teachers say they are using them, only about 25% are higher-level questions (Brophy, 1986). For this reason, teachers who seek to be effective at this instructional strategy should work with the material to be taught ahead of time and come up with some questions that can be used with students.

When teaching basic skills, frequent questioning using lower-level questions can help to reinforce the concept through a repetitive quick back-and-forth interaction between students, teachers, and content. There are conflicting thoughts about having another student help a struggling student answer a question. In a study by Anderson et al. (1979), it was stated that "a teacher should never ask another child to supply the answer" (p. 198). Lemov (2010) spoke of a strategy called *No Opt Out* which provides that when a student answers a question incorrectly, another student is called on to give the correct answer. Once the correct answer is given, the first student who answered incorrectly, is asked the same question and is now expected to know the

answer. If the purpose of asking questions is to check for understanding, it is important for students to realize an incorrect response or a response of "I don't know" will not be accepted. The teacher may choose to ask additional questions to lead the student toward the correct answer or to have a classmate provide the correct answer. Using the Instruction as Interaction model, Cohen et al. (2003) showed that the relationship between classmates and their teacher helps guide whether the correct answer should be provided by the teacher or a classmate.

Higher-level questioning requires effective teachers to be very familiar with the content of their lessons and the abilities of the students in the classroom. The use of this type of questioning leads to a deeper understanding of content and allows students to make even greater connections. Redfield and Rousseau's (1981) meta-analysis of teacher questioning techniques found that the use of higher-cognitive questions leads to a positive impact on student achievement. In order to identify a question as being at a higher level, the question should require the student to manipulate the information they have. The question should not require an answer that is a simple recitation of what students know. Teachers in high-achieving classrooms ask questions which require students to explain how they came up with an answer or to describe the strategies used to solve a problem.

In a study by Fisher and Hiebert (1990), students were assigned to either a literacy-based group or a skills-oriented group. The literacy-based group was exposed to higher-level questioning and frequently took part in interpreting text, writing and discussing literacy experiences, and framing the direction of their learning. The skills-oriented group was given tasks that tested students' knowledge but allowed for very little student interaction and no opportunities to apply what they had learned. Students need to be led into thinking about what they have read and how they can apply their understanding at a variety of levels. The use of

higher-level questioning can be a predictor of student growth (Taylor et al., 2002; Wray et al., 2000).

Scaffolding within education is a strategy in and of itself. Scaffolding is a method where students are provided support at their level, with the idea of them moving forward at their own pace. One outcome of scaffolding is students become independent when the supports that have been in place are gradually removed. Within the instructional strategy of questioning, scaffolding is a method of questioning which moves students forward in understanding a concept by asking questions they were not quite ready to grasp on their own, (Topping & Ferguson, 2005; Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998) but providing the support for them to be successful. Teachers, who are effective in their use of questioning, understand how to build upon student response to help students discover the answers on their own.

Balanced instruction. Balanced instruction "seeks to combine or balance skill-based and meaning-based instruction in order to ensure positive reading. . .results in children" (Bingham & Hall-Kenyon, 2013, p. 15). Often, explicit instruction is seen during the skill-based portion of a classroom in which balanced instruction is used. Once students have received instruction using the gradual release of responsibilities, students are then able to use these skills during the meaning-based portion of class. Broken down in a more concise manner, "literacy instruction should promote the interaction between the skills-based aspects of reading (e.g. phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, letter sounds association) and the meaning-based aspects of reading (e.g.) vocabulary, comprehension" (Bingham & Hall Kenyon, 2013, p. 15).

In studies which specifically discuss balanced instruction, teachers are seen to use high-quality literature and the use of basic skills in reading and writing instruction. In Fisher and Hiebert's (1990) work, it appeared students who were taught in a literacy-based approach had

more opportunities for ownership and connection to their learning tasks. There was little in their study that demonstrated positive results for skills-based instruction taught in exclusivity. The implementation of a balanced instructional program was achieved in a variety of ways (Baumann, Duffy-Hester, Hoffman, & Ro, 2000; Taylor et al., 2002; Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998). Effective teachers can accomplish a balanced literary approach by teaching skills in whole group settings and then using small group settings to reinforce skills taught. Targeting the needs of individual students during these small group settings is necessary to make the connection between skills that were taught explicitly and using them to find meaning in various pieces of literature. Another highly-effective teacher could introduce skills during small group instruction using authentic literature and spend little time in whole group instruction. These studies show that a balanced approach to literacy is necessary for effective teaching and improving student achievement.

Coaching approach. The instructional strategy of coaching is a way for a teacher to help students identify what he or she already knows about a topic or to provide the teacher, again in a conspicuous manner, with direct links between old and new content (Marzano, 2003). Teachers who engaged students in active learning through a coaching approach were more successful than students who were told information and were passive learners (Taylor et al., 2000; Taylor et al., 2002). Coaching can be accomplished by responding to incorrect answers with more questions to help students figure out the answers on their own. Encouraging students to elaborate on their ideas in written work and in group discussions or scaffolding is another way for teachers to coach students. Coaching can also be utilized to help direct student attention to the areas where improvement or more focus is needed (Rasinski, Homan, & Biggs, 2009). Many ineffective teachers spend too much instructional time telling students information rather than

leading them to discover knowledge on their own. This takes away opportunities to, "evaluate students' growth toward independence" (Taylor et al., 2002, p. 277).

Goal setting. Students need to set goals, work to achieve their goals, and reflect on this process. If one considers teacher reflection a characteristic of an effective teacher, the same can be said for students. These goals ideally should start as a classroom goal and then develop further to meet individual student needs. Locke and Lathan (1990) found that goal setting that is challenging and explicit enhanced outcomes. They argue that goals are essential in the learning process because goals facilitate action. Goal setting helps students, through the support of their teachers, to understand what is be done or achieved. This provides students with direction for their effort and work. A crucial component of goal setting for students (and for teachers) is timely feedback. Although student goal setting and timely feedback are listed under instructional strategies, there is a need for an effective teacher to lead their students through this journey. Feedback can be provided by the teacher, by peers, and by the individual student. Feedback should include what is working well and what needs to be changed to achieve a particular goal (Marzano et al., 2001).

Student grouping. Another component in an effective classroom requires students to be grouped in ways that positively influence their learning. Large group instruction is utilized in many of the studies as a way to introduce a lesson (Baumann et al., 2000). Small group instruction is specifically mentioned in several studies as a way to ensure student participation and engagement. Small group instruction is often seen as a characteristic of an effective primary classroom. There are instructional practices that can be more easily accomplished in a small group setting such as ordered turns which would not be as effective during large group

instruction (Anderson et al., 1979; Taylor et al., 2002). These small groups are often divided by ability.

Within the greater strategy of student grouping, another small group option calls for students to be engaged in small group learning opportunities with their peers and without the lead of the teacher or other adult; this type of engagement is most commonly referred to as cooperative learning. Another definition of cooperative learning is, "the instructional use of small groups so that students can work together to accomplish a common purpose and maximize their own and others' learning" (Bromley & Modlo, 1997, p. 22).

There are different models of cooperative learning. In some models, groups of students are in competition with other groups of students. This competition can provide a type of reward to students who are able to succeed over another group. However, this model can be counterproductive if the groups of students are not evenly matched (Slavin, 1980). Other models assign specific roles for each child to complete; for example, a recorder, the reporter, the leader, etc. By assigning each child a specific role, students understand what they are expected to do as contributing members of the group. In all of these models, cooperative learning emphasizes academic and interpersonal skills. One study by Antil, Jenkins, Wayne, and Vadasy (1998) divided these skills into five parts: (a) positive interdependence, (b) individual accountability, (c) promotive interaction, (d) group processing, and (e) development of small group skills. Positive interdependence requires students to believe they must work together to reach their objective. Individual accountability involves students who understand that as a member of the group they are responsible for contributing in a meaningful way. Promotive interaction is a skill that necessitates group members to support the work of the group and its members. Group processing is a critical skill in which the group reflects on their work and makes them consider

ways in which the project/process/assignment could have been improved. Finally, the development of small group skills could be the easiest to understand, but the hardest to teach. Small group skills are the personal and interpersonal skills students need to work effectively with one another—listening, being nice to one another, taking turns, etc.

Ultimately, cooperative learning gives students the opportunity to talk and listen to one another. This dialogue allows students to talk through a project or a concept thereby developing a stronger understanding. As one part of their Instruction as Interaction model, Cohen et al. (2003) described the interdependence of teachers and students, as well as students with other students, as a fluid system where students and teachers use their relationships with one another to make judgments about how and when to use resources. These resources are not always curricular materials, but can also be other people. Cooperative learning requires these relationships and works to develop the understanding of when and how to use resources. Succinctly put, the reason for using this strategy is to "help students deepen knowledge by processing it together and to motivate them to learn through what researchers call positive interdependence" (Goodwin, 2011, p. 30).

There are some questions surrounding the dynamics of group size and instruction: Should these groups be homogenous or heterogeneous? Ford and Opitz (2002) and Marzano et al. (2001) both provided cautionary notes about the division of groups by ability level. Their reasons were different, but nonetheless worth consideration. Ford and Opitz believed the division of students by specific learning abilities has the potential for creating too many groups thus causing the teacher to have less contact with students. Marzano et al. (2001) stated it is better to group homogeneously than to not group at all. However, all students perform at a higher level when in a heterogeneous group.

Should students of lower ability receive more time in small group instruction than those who are successful academically? The results of studies showed all students should receive time in small groups with teacher intervention. Small group instruction can be used for remediation purposes for struggling students or as a way to provide higher-achieving students with accelerated or enriched instruction. In general, students who struggle with new materials or are behind academically should receive more small group instruction (Instruction, 2011; Pressley et al., 1997).

Should the group composition change over time or stay the same? It is important for teachers to consider the needs of the students in groups. If students were placed in a group due to struggling to understand a concept, teachers should know when a child has mastered that concept and is ready to move forward to the next level. If other students in the group are still struggling and are not ready to move forward, it might be best if the child is moved to a new group. Taylor et al. (2000) supported this flexibility of entering and exiting a group. They believed it is important that these groups allow students to move in and out of groups based on their academic needs.

Common Themes of Literature

These instructional strategies are often related to one another and often can be seen simultaneously in effective classrooms. The coaching approach and higher levels of questioning center on the way teachers use questioning to guide students to make connections, to lead them to the next cognitive step, or to show the interrelatedness of two concepts. Balanced instruction is closely related to the appropriate use of explicit instruction. The introduction of a skill through explicit instruction which a teacher can then connect to a real world experience through

the use of high-quality literature is another way these strategies are all connected. These strategies can all be used within small group, individual, and whole group instruction.

Supporting all of these strategies are the components of classroom management and student engagement. These components and instructional strategies must be used together by an effective teacher to increase student achievement.

Implications for research. Through this literature review, I have provided a cross section of multiple studies conducted on effective teachers and effective instructional strategies. There are commonalities, which are evident and shared in detail through this review. For future researchers, there is a need to determine which instructional strategies are the most prevalent in the classrooms of highly effective teachers. Is there a specific amount of time each instructional delivery method should be used? Moving away from instructional delivery methods, which of the strategies listed above have the largest positive impact on student achievement? Are there other instructional strategies that are not mentioned that should be considered?

Implications for teaching. As multiple studies and books have been written about effective teachers and instructional practices, I have concerns about how many of these strategies can be implemented effectively and with fidelity by teachers. Teachers may not be able to become experts in all of the strategies found to positively impact student achievement in literacy. It was also important to know if the instructional strategies found to be the most effective in this study were effective with all students, or were effective with particular students in particular environments. This study focused on a suburban school setting with a low percentage of minority students and a low percentage of students living in poverty. If these strategies are used in a rural or urban setting, the outcomes have the potential to be very different.

Taylor, Peterson, Pearson, and Rodriguez (2002) stated,

> If we are serious about the metaphor of "leaving no child behind," our data would suggest that we, as professionals, must possess the conviction, the knowledge, and the teaching techniques necessary to ensure that every child in that march (toward full literacy) is equipped with a "full backpack" of skills, strategies, habits, and dispositions toward literacy. (pp. 278-279)

The strategies listed above have the potential to provide many tools needed for this "backpack." One now needs to help teachers understand how to use their instructional practices to make this a reality.

Most of the studies I reviewed for this chapter used experimental rather than naturalistic research designs. My research was conducted in a naturalistic setting as I was not providing any of the teachers I observed with instructional recommendations, and I observed routine practice. My observations were done to view teacher instruction as it was enacted without interference. This naturalistic approach was intended to provide data that was accurate and captured what occurred in classrooms. If teachers would have known what data were collected during the classroom observations, teachers might have tried to include instructional strategies they did not normally use in order to satisfy the observation rubric.

This chapter defined instruction as the interconnectedness of teachers, students, and content within environments. Recent changes to federal and state policy, teacher evaluation, and teacher compensation and their impact on instruction were explained. Foundational teaching components and instructional strategies were described. Finally, implications for research and teaching were provided. Chapter 3 provides the methodology used for this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

In this chapter, I describe the research methods used to respond to the research questions that developed as a result of my review of literature. The design of my research is examined and explained. I also describe the observation instrument and the interview protocol used to collect the necessary data. Finally, I provide an explanation of how the observation and interview data were collected and analyzed.

Purpose of the Study

One purpose of this mixed-method study was to describe which instructional strategies and foundational components are the most prevalent and at a higher level of instructional quality in classrooms where the teachers have realized achievement growth at least one standard deviation above the mean of their grade level. The teachers who were a part of this study were identified through their students' yearly growth, as measured using DIBELS. Another purpose was to investigate whether there was a difference in the instructional quality of the instructional strategies and foundational components between those teachers rated highly effective and those rated effective. The independent variables in this study were the teachers' grade levels, years of experience, gender, achievement growth of their students, and teacher effectiveness (as measured by the Hessville School District Teacher Evaluation Tool, a modified RISE tool). The dependent variable was instructional quality (as measured by the scores on a rubric that assessed instructional strategies). The qualitative portion of the study was intended to provide a deeper understanding of the instructional practices of the teachers who participated in the study.

Research Questions

Based on the review of literature, these research questions represented current gaps in the knowledge base and guided this research study. Which instructional strategies are the most prevalent in the classrooms of elementary teachers with high student achievement growth? In order to answer this overarching question, there were several additional questions which, when answered, provided a richer understanding of instructional strategies.

1. Which literacy instructional strategies and foundational components are used at a higher level of instructional quality?
2. How does instructional quality and frequency of these strategies and components vary depending on: grade level, class size, teachers' years of experience, and teacher effectiveness (as rated on district evaluation tool)?
3. What are the perceptions of highly effective and effective teachers in Hessville School District as they describe effective instruction in literacy?

Rationale for Research Questions

The emergent findings from the literature review put forth a consistent set of instructional strategies found to have a positive impact on students' literacy achievement when implemented with fidelity. However, prior to delving into these strategies, it was important to consider some other critical components necessary to establishing a classroom where learning can flourish. These components were classroom management and student engagement. The following graphic represents how these critical components support and provide the foundation for instructional strategies to be effectively implemented.

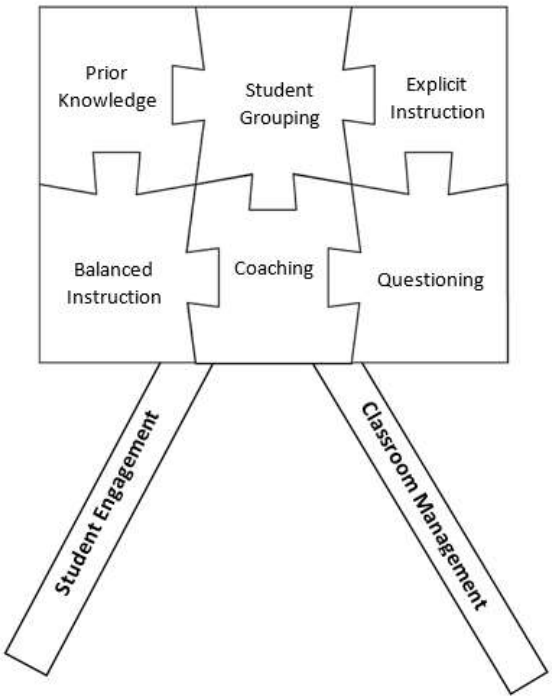

Figure 2. Supportive and Foundational Instructional Strategies

As discovered in Chapter 2, the instructional strategies associated with high student growth in literacy included explicit instruction, making connections to prior knowledge, questioning, balanced instruction, coaching, student grouping, and goal setting. From the work of John Hattie, meta-analyses of these strategies were conducted which showed an effect size between 0.41 and 0.75. It was important to remember that there were countless other instructional strategies that have been found to be effective outside of literacy instruction. There have been many questions about instruction answered in previous studies. These studies have resulted in recommendations that have helped to change instruction in literacy.

In 1997, the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development was asked by Congress to review existing research on reading. The intent would be to provide evidence of the best ways to teach children to read. In response, the National Reading Panel was created. In

2000, after reviewing thousands of studies, narrowing the selection of these studies, and analyzing the chosen studies, the panel released their report, Teaching Children to Read (International Reading Association [IRA], 2002). In summary, this report found that effective instruction in reading required explicit instruction in phonemic, a systematic approach to instruction of phonics, improvement of fluency, and ways to enhance comprehension (IRA, 2002).

Research Design

This study was conducted through a mixed method approach. Prior to the introduction of mixed methods research in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Creswell, 2014), quantitative and qualitative research conducted independently were seen as the only pure methods of research. Mixed methods research requires the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. There are a variety of mixed methods designs that provide for differences in how the different data are used together. In this study, a convergent parallel mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2014) was utilized, meaning the data collected were analyzed separately and then analyzed to compare and relate the findings to respond to the research questions.

Having identified both classroom components and instructional strategies that research has shown to be present in high growth achieving reading classrooms, I used both classroom walk through observations and teacher interviews to gather data on the use and frequency of use of these strategies. Ball and Rowan (2004) stated that researching instruction through only one method "lacks insight gained by viewing instruction from other angles" (p. 5). With this understanding, observations of classroom teachers' classrooms, and interviews with these same teachers provided a more complete picture of the instructional process. These data were used to learn if there was a strategy or strategies that were the most prevalent in high-growth classrooms

or if there was a difference in the strategies used by effective teachers versus highly-effective teachers. I also used these data to establish if there was a relationship between what was observed in the classroom versus what the classroom teacher perceived as happening in the classroom. The following sections describe this study's quantitative and qualitative methods in more detail.

Quantitative methods. Quantitative research is utilized to collect numeric data and the analysis of these data. This type of research generally uses a set of questions or tests that can be controlled. For this study, a rubric (see Appendix B) was used to gather data during classroom observations. I completed classroom observations where I looked for and categorized a very specific list of instructional strategies. I used a rubric during each classroom observation that provided a structure for and valuation of the observed instructional strategies.

Qualitative methods. Interview data are often associated with qualitative research. This type of research "focuses on in-depth understanding of social and human behavior and the reasons behind such behavior" (Hoy, 2010, p. 1). The data collected provided a, "means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Cresswell, 2009, p. 4). Interviews were conducted with classroom teachers. These interviews provided a deeper understanding of the instructional strategies that were utilized in each classroom. Teachers were asked to provide information about themselves and their classroom, reflection on what methods they used most frequently, and how goal setting was used in the classroom.

Research Site: Hessville School District

Hessville School District was located in a Midwestern suburb. It was a district which contained six elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school and served

approximately 8,300 students. Over the past 10 years, the poverty rate had doubled with about 25% of students receiving free and reduced lunch during the 2015-2016 school year compared with only 12% of students who received free and reduced meals during the 2005-2006 school year. As shown in Table 3, the ethnicity breakdown of Hessville School District was 77.1% white, 10.7% African American, 4.8% multi-racial, 4.7% Hispanic, and 2.5% Asian. The ethnic diversity of the district was steadily changing. Over the past 10 years, the population of white students had decreased from 88% to 77.1%. The percentage had decreased although the actual number of white students had increased. This was due to an overall enrollment growth of 1,801 in the past 10 years (http://compass.doe.in.gov/dashboard/overview.aspx). Despite these changing demographics, the Hessville School District was one of four school districts in the state whose ISTEP scores had placed them in the top five districts for the past four school years.

Although historically an academically strong school district, the past five years saw continual high academic performance on state measures, such as state testing and graduation rates (shown in Table 2). For each of the past five years, state testing mathematics scores in Hessville School District were higher than the year before with the spring of 2014 results showing the highest pass rate of 95.9%. For English/language arts, the same was true with scores higher than the previous year. For example, Spring 2014 results were the highest ever in the district with a pass rate of 91.8%. Graduation rates were 7-8% above the state average with the graduation rate for 2014 as the highest in district history with 98.3% of seniors graduating in four years.

In the spring of 2015, new, more rigorous college-and-career ready standards and a new statewide assessment were implemented. Thus, the results from 2014-2015 should not be compared to the previous data. However, it is important to point out that although there was a

decline in the scores of Hessville School District for the 2014-2015 school year, the decline was significantly less than the decline seen across the state. The Hessville School District remains a top performing school district regardless of the test. These high performance marks even with a new test made it important to study this school district and its teachers.

Table 2

Snapshot of Hessville School District Data Compared to State Data 2013-2014

Subject	2013-2014 Hessville Pass Rate %	2013-2014 State Pass Rate %	2014-2015 Hessville Pass Rate %	2014-2015 State Pass Rate %
Math State Test	95.90%	83.50%	86.40%	61.00%
English State Test	91.80%	80.70%	85.60%	67.30%
Combined Math & English	90.50%	74.70%	79.70%	53.50%
Graduation Rate	98.30%	90.00%	97.20%	88.90%

Table 3

Snapshot of Student Demographic Data

Item	2014-2015 Student Demographic Data
Ethnicity	
White	78.10%
African American	10.40%
Multi-racial	4.60%
Hispanic	4.30%
Asian	2.40%
SES	
Free Lunch	18.30%
Reduced Lunch	6.70%
Paid Lunch	75.00%

Phase One: Selection of Classroom Sample

In Hessville School District, DIBELS was administered three times a year in kindergarten through fifth grade. Using inter-rater reliability and the test-retest method, the reliability of DIBELS was shown to be between .70 and .99. DIBELS data are intended to provide information to teachers on which students are struggling so that teachers can work with these students to develop the early reading skills necessary to prevent reading difficulties in the future. Students whose DIBELS data show they have not met grade-level cut scores are provided with additional instructional time in reading. DIBELS data are also used to show that students who have developed the appropriate reading skills continue to make the appropriate gains needed to stay at or above grade level in the basic skills of literacy.

The DIBELS tests vary based on a student's grade level (see Appendix A for a chart outlining tests administered by grade level), not on a student's literacy level. In kindergarten, students are tested on letter recognition, phonemic awareness, and phonics. In first grade and second grade, students are tested on phonics and reading fluency. In Grades 3 through 5, students are tested on reading fluency and reading comprehension. With only one exception, these tests are administered orally in a one-on-one setting with the classroom teacher and the student. The exception to this is the administration of one component of the reading comprehension test, DAZE, which is a written test and is administered in a large group setting in grades 3 through 5. In each grade level, the scores from the different subtests are used to determine the overall composite score.

The composite scores place students into one of three categories: At or Above Benchmark, Below Benchmark, and Well Below Benchmark. Hessville School District referred to these scores by these three categories as Core (At or Above Benchmark), Strategic (Below

Benchmark), and Intensive (Well Below Benchmark). Table 4 provides information on what the different categories represent.

DIBELS refers to the composite scores that result in a score of Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark as being "cut points for risk."

> The *cut points for risk* indicate a level of skill below which the student is unlikely to achieve subsequent reading goals without receiving additional, targeted instructional support. Students with scores below the cut point for risk are identified as likely to need intensive support. Intensive support refers to interventions that incorporate something more or something different from the core curriculum or supplemental support. Intensive support might entail:
>
> • delivering instruction in a smaller group,
>
> • providing more instructional time or more practice,
>
> • presenting smaller skill steps in the instructional hierarchy,
>
> • providing more explicit modeling and instruction, and/or
>
> • providing greater scaffolding and practice. (Dynamic Measurement Group, 2010, p. 1)

Table 4

Odds of Achieving Subsequent Early Literacy Goals, DIBELS Goal Levels and Likely Need of Support

Odds of Achieving Subsequent Early Literacy Goals (%)	Score Level	Likely need for support to achieve subsequent early literacy goals
80% - 90%	At or Above Benchmark *scores at or above the benchmark goal*	Likely to Need Core Support
40% - 60%	Below Benchmark *scores below the benchmark goal and at or above the cut point for risk*	Likely to Need Strategic Support
10% - 20%	Well Below Benchmark *scores below the cut point for risk*	Likely to Need Intensive Support

Source. Adapted from Dynamic Measurement Group (2010)

Although student data are analyzed by classroom teachers on an individual student basis, at the district level the mean growth for each classroom teacher was considered by comparing beginning-of-the-year test scores to end of-the-year test scores. The district expectation was that all students show a minimum of a year's worth of growth.

In order to determine which classroom teachers should be part of the research, I began by considering all kindergarten through fifth grade general education classrooms and two high-ability classrooms at each school. I refined the sample by excluding first year teachers because they did not have longitudinal data. Additionally, first year teacher data in Hessville School District had the potential to be skewed as it was standard practice that first year teachers often do not receive the same classroom make up as do veteran teachers. Veteran teachers may have a class with more students with special learning needs including students with special education

needs, students who are English language learners, etc. It was rare that a first year teacher in Hessville would have a classroom with those additional student needs. I also eliminated the data of teachers who had resigned, retired, or who had been terminated. The final group of teachers whose data were considered closely were those who had moved between grade levels. If teachers who had moved between grade levels did not have two years of data from the same grade, they were eliminated. To be eligible for this study, a teacher must teach for two consecutive years in the same grade level as it is possible that one year of data may reflect extreme high or low growth. Finding the mean of at least two years of data in the same grade level was intended to take into account the potential for outlying scores.

To further refine the pool of teachers for the study, I calculated the mean growth of each classroom for each year. This mean growth was calculated by using the DIBELS composite scores from the beginning of the year administration and subtracting that score from the end of the year administration's composite score. In most instances, DIBELS provides direction on individual student growth rather than teacher growth. For this study, the use of teacher mean growth was used as a way to determine high growth by teacher rather than by student.

To continue the selection process, after I had the mean growth for each teacher's class for each year, I aggregated the scores by teacher to calculate the overall mean growth for each teacher. When the mean growth for each teacher was calculated, I used these data to find the standard deviation. This was done by grade level rather than across the sample because of the variance in the mean growth expected by DIBELS for each grade level.

DIBELS research provides the anticipated beginning of the year and end of the year scores for a student to be at Core. Students who are at Core are at/above grade level. Core is the goal for all students. These anticipated ranges (shown in Table 5) are similar for all grades

except first and fifth grades. The first grade difference in growth is a result of a test that measures different skills in the beginning of the year than in measures at the end of the year. The beginning of the year test for first grade students evaluates Phoneme Segmentation Fluency and Nonsense Word Fluency and the end of the year evaluates Nonsense Word Fluency and Oral Reading Fluency. For fifth and sixth grades, DIBELS research stated, "The difficulty level of the passages increases by grade in a roughly linear fashion. However, student performance increases in a curve, with the most growth occurring in the earlier grades, and slower growth in the upper grades" (Dynamic Measurement Group, Inc., n.d., para. 6)

Table 5

DIBELS Anticipated Growth Data

Grade	Beginning of the Year	End of the Year	Difference
K	26	119	93
1	113	155	42
2	141	238	97
3	220	330	110
4	290	391	99
5	357	415	58
6	344	380	36

The last step in selecting the sample was to choose teachers whose mean growth was at least one standard deviation above the mean of their grade level. Table 6 provides the mean of each grade level, the number of teachers in the grade level, the standard deviation, and the number of teachers whose average growth was at least one standard deviation above the mean in that grade level. Using these data, there were a total of 20 teachers who were invited to be part of the study.

Table 6

Hessville District DIBELS Mean Growth Data

Grade Level	*M*	Number of Teachers	*SD*	1 SD Above the Mean	Teachers 1 SD Above Mean
K	137.98	32	21.95	159.93	1
1	97.68	30	13.89	111.57	3
2	108.29	29	20.20	128.49	5
3	138.80	25	23.30	162.10	2
4	116.81	22	19.63	136.44	3
5	85.98	26	20.56	106.54	6

Instrumentation

A variety of instruments were used to complete this research. Classroom observations were conducted using a rubric based on the work of Charlotte Danielson (2007) and Carolyn Downey (2004). After classroom observations were completed, interviews of classroom teachers were conducted. Finally, teacher evaluation data from the Hessville School District were utilized.

Phase Two: The Classroom Observation and Analysis

Instrument. Based on Danielson's (2007) and Downey's (2004) work, an observation tool was developed for classroom observations. This tool (Appendix B) is a rubric that was used in classrooms to track the instructional strategies being used and the level at which these strategies were being implemented. In addition to the instructional strategies, the critical components considered necessary to all classrooms (student engagement and classroom management) were evaluated during each walk through.

Most walk through rubrics and observation forms are used with the intention of providing feedback to teachers (Danielson, 2007; Downey, 2004). The observations that were conducted for this study were not used in this manner. The observations were for data collection only and were not intended to be given to teachers for review and/or reflection.

The main component of Downey's (2004) walk through that was used in this study was the idea of each observation being "short, focused, yet informal," (p. 2). Additionally, Downey walk throughs were planned to be unannounced; therefore, these were conducted without notice to the teachers. Although teachers who participated in the study knew that observations would occur during the 90-minute reading block, they were not informed on which days or at what time the observations would occur.

Danielson (2007) developed a framework that, "identified those aspects of a teacher's responsibilities that have been documented through empirical studies and theoretical research as promoting improved student learning" (p. 1). Danielson's work was the basis for the Hessville Certified Evaluation Process's observation rubric. Typically, it is best practice to review a walk through rubric with teachers before and after the walk through. Seeing the rubric before the classroom walk through allows for teachers to understand the expectations. After the classroom walk through is completed, the evaluator and the teacher review the rubric together. This allows for conversation between the teacher and the evaluator about strategies that work well with students and potentially areas for improvement. In this study, the walk through was not intended to be used for evaluation, rather only for research. Therefore, the completed rubric was not shared with teachers.

Each category on the rubric from Danielson (2007) was divided into four categories: unsatisfactory, basic, proficient, and distinguished. In order to be able to use the data gathered, I

changed these topics to numerical rankings of 0 – 3. Zero was marked if a strategy was not observed; 1 represented a low level or non-proficient level of use of the instructional strategy, 2 represented the expected level of proficiency of the instructional strategy, and 3 represented highly-proficient use of the instructional strategy.

I developed indicators for each section of the rubric by adapting indicators from both Danielson's (2007) and Teachscape's (2006) models. The language used from a Category 1 to a Category 2 to a Category 3 are intended to build upon each other so that the differences among levels can be easily seen. For instance, within the category of Questioning Techniques, a Category 1 ranking would indicate, "Questions are of poor quality with low cognitive demand. Asked in rapid succession without time for reflection." In contrast, a Category 3 ranking for this same topic would indicate, "High quality questioning using multiple levels of questioning (Blooms/DOK) [DOK or Depth of Knowledge is the complexity or depth of understanding required to answer or explain an assessment of a related item (http://teaching.about.com/od/A-ITeachingGlossary/g/Depth-Of-Knowledge.htm).] Most require thoughtful response. Appropriate wait time." These categories cause the observer to consider the types of questions, the level of cognitive response, and wait time. This format of providing the definition of what each category represents is designed to enhance the reliability of the data collection.

Data collection procedure. A pilot of the walk through tool was conducted in March 2015 when I conducted 13 observations. Throughout the pilot, several modifications to the tool and parameters for length of time were set forth. The observations lasted at least 10 minutes and were no more than 15 minutes. Each teacher who was part of the study had three observations completed between August 2016 and December 2016. These observations took place during the 90-minute literacy block.

When considering the construct of balanced instruction, there is not a rubric to be used, rather a check box that indicates if the students are participating in skills-based or meaning-based instruction. At the completion of the research, all of the observations for each teacher were compiled to establish if there was a balance between skills-based and meaning-based instruction. This change was made as it is unlikely to see both skills-based and meaning-based instruction during a 10-minute observation. Additionally, there was not a rubric for student grouping. A subset of student grouping, cooperative learning was included as a separate strategy to be evaluated for frequency and instructional quality. Check boxes were included to indicate the type of instructional group(s) that was used during the observation. I compiled these data at the end of the study to quantify which type of grouping was most frequently observed. Finally, goal setting was only assessed during an interview session.

Unless a substitute teacher was in the classroom or the students were taking a test, I completed an observation if I entered the classroom. During each unannounced observation, I kept track of evidence of the critical classroom components and also the instructional strategies. Each of these were evaluated using the rubric created for these observations. In order to determine if there were other instructional strategies that were widespread throughout the Hessville School District, such additional instructional strategies were recorded through anecdotal notes.

Analysis. Because each teacher was observed three times, the data from each of these observations were combined to provide central tendencies for each instructional strategy for each teacher. Descriptive statistics, such as the frequency of use of each instructional strategy, were calculated and the means of instructional quality for the strategies were determined.

I used longitudinal statistical measures as the observations were conducted over a period of several months. Repeated measure ANOVAs were used, which was appropriate when the same entities, in this case the teachers, participated in all aspects of the study. The repeated measure ANOVAs were tested for the variance of the results. If the variance results were not equal, the assumption of sphericity was not met. If this occurred, it was necessary to run multivariate test statistics, MANOVA, because they were not dependent on the assumption of sphericity.

Phase Three: Teacher Interview

Instrument. During the observation window of August 2016 and December 2016, each teacher participating in the study was interviewed. This interview was intended to gather information regarding instructional strategies and the perception of their use in the classroom. The interview questions (Appendix C) were developed after the walk through pilot was completed. During the pilot, it was difficult to ascertain how goal setting was used within each classroom and to what extent students were aware of the goals that were set for the classroom and for each individual student. There was some evidence of goal setting that was observable, generally seen as posters or displays; however, specific details were not apparent. In order to have a complete understanding of the use of instructional strategies, the interview also included questions where the teacher was asked to indicate which strategy he/she felt was used the most effectively. The teachers were asked to share their thoughts on both the predetermined strategies as described in the literature review, as well as those not listed on the rubric. The interview data were used to gather information difficult to observe in a walk through. It was used in conjunction with the observation data to see if there was a link between teacher perception and a supervisor's observation of instructional strategies used in effective classrooms.

The interview was semi-scripted in that it provided some specific questions such as: What does effective literacy instruction look like to you? Why? As the interviewer, if the teacher was parsimonious in responding, I asked additional questions to probe with the idea of obtaining a more complete, richer response.

Data Collection Procedure

I interviewed the same classroom teachers in the previously described sample for approximately 30 minutes. All 21 teachers (100%) who participated in the first part of the study participated in the interview portion. These interviews were conducted after the third classroom observation was completed. The reason for the staggering of the data collection was so that the questions asked during the interview did not bias the instructional practices that were being observed. The interview was conducted in a location of the teacher's choosing—conference room, classroom, etc. Prior to the start of the interview, the teacher was reminded that the information gathered during the interview was for research purposes and would not be shared with Hessville School District administrators.

There was an audio recording made of each interview, which was transcribed and coded. This was then used to understand emergent themes. The interview began by asking the teacher to describe his/her current class, including grade level and class size. The teacher was also asked to share information about the length of time he/she had taught. From there, a variety of questions were asked about instructional strategies in general along with specific questions about goal setting and critical components to classroom success (Full interview protocol is presented in Appendix C). Finally, teachers were given a card with the specific instructional strategies researched (Appendix D). Teachers were asked to give their definition of each of these strategies

and how they used them in their classrooms. They were asked to identify which strategy they felt they used the most effectively and why they believed that to be true.

Analysis. After conducting all of the interviews, some of the data were used to answer quantitative research questions. These data included the number of years a teacher had taught, the number of students in the classroom, and grade level. The data collected from the qualitative research questions needed to be organized so that commonalities and differences were easy to discern.

To analyze the information collected during the teacher interviews, it was important to first identify the concepts that emerged from the answers received during the interviews. These concepts were then grouped by theme to allow me to understand what the data showed. This type of analysis called open coding requires "putting aside preconceived notions about what the researcher expects to find in the research, and letting the data and interpretation of it guide analysis" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 160).

Upon the completion of the initial coding of the teacher interviews, it was necessary to see if there were instances where the responses from teachers were related to one another. Axial coding takes the concepts that have been broken apart in open coding and puts them back together for deeper analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Using the data that had been coded and linked, I sought to understand the perceptions of effective and highly-effective teachers with regard to effective instructional strategies in literacy.

Phase Four: Effectiveness Rating

After all of the observations and interviews were conducted, I gathered the final piece of data, the archival data of the evaluation rating of each teacher I had observed. It was critical that this step occur after the observations and interviews had been completed so I would not be biased

in the way I viewed the observations or interviews. The data were kept by Hessville School District's Director of Human Resources. She was given the names of the teachers who had been observed and interviewed. She provided me with just the final ratings of each teacher without sharing any comments, item specific scores, or reflection/responsive questions. These evaluations had been completed during the 2015-2016 school year by each teacher's principal. These observations were not conducted during the same time frame as the proposed study. Rather, teacher observation data had been completed during a school year of collected and used DIBELS data. Thus, the teacher evaluation data coincided with the student data collected that placed those particular teachers in the study.

Data collection procedure. Only after the classroom observations had been completed and the teacher interviews coded did the final data collection occur. To ensure confidentiality of teacher ranking data, a list of participants was provided to the Director of Human Resources of Hessville School District. The Director of Human Resources used a coded identifier for each teacher, which I did not know.

Analysis. The individual effectiveness rating of each teacher was analyzed in comparison to the instructional quality data gathered during classroom observations. The ratings were also used in conjunction with the coded data of teacher perception collected during the teacher interviews.

Table 7 provides a summary of the research questions that were answered. The specific portions of each tool that was used to answer the research questions are indicated.

Table 7

Corresponding Rubric and Interview Items to Research Items

Research Questions	Corresponding Survey / Interview Item
1. Which instructional strategies and foundational components are used at a higher level of instructional quality?	**Classroom Rubric: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 Interview question: 4a, 4b, 4c, 4d**
2. How does instructional quality and frequency of these strategies and components vary depending on: grade level, class size, teacher's years of experience, teacher effectiveness (as rated on district evaluation tool)?	**Classroom Rubric: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 Interview question:1, 2 District Evaluation Ranking**
3. What are the perceptions of highly effective and effective teachers in Hessville School District as they describe effective instruction in literacy?	**Classroom Rubric: Interview question: 5 and 6 District Evaluation Ranking:**

Limitations

I am a district-level administrator for Hessville School District; however, I am not responsible for evaluating teachers. Although I have spent time in classrooms over the past four school years, these visits were to observe the use of a new textbook series or a writing program. Having been employed in the Hessville School District for the past 22 years, I know the majority of teachers in the district first as a teacher colleague and only most recently as a district administrator. This has led to my having strong relationships with teachers where there is a level of trust and confidence in my work with them. Although there was certainly the potential for teachers who were asked to participate in the study to be apprehensive, teachers were given the

opportunity to decline the invitation with no consequences. Additionally, teachers who were invited to participate in the study knew that anything observed during the study was not shared with other administrators in the Hessville School District, all data and references to their teaching or classroom was done using pseudonyms, and finally, no mention of their participation was part of their employee file.

Summary

This chapter detailed the mixed methods design utilized for this study. This chapter included the explanation of how the identification of teachers was determined and the collection tools that were used for both classroom observations and teacher interviews. Finally, an explanation of how the data were collected and analyzed was provided. Chapter 4 provides a detailed analysis of the results.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this study was to learn which instructional strategies were the most prevalent and used at a higher level of instructional quality in the area of literacy. The study was conducted in Hessville School District in elementary classrooms, grades kindergarten through fifth grade. The teachers selected to participate in the study had previously realized student achievement growth at least one standard deviation above the mean of their grade-level peers across the school district. This chapter includes descriptions about the participants, results from observations, and findings from interviews. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research results.

Hessville School District was a high-achieving school district that, based on ISTEP scores, had been identified as one of the top five districts in the state of Indiana for the past five years. The district had a free and reduced lunch population of 25% and a minority population of 23%. The student make-up of Hessville had a larger minority and free and reduced lunch population than the other school districts identified in the top five.

Which instructional strategies are the most prevalent in the classrooms of elementary teachers with high student achievement growth? In order to answer this overarching question, there were several additional questions which, when answered, provided a richer understanding of instructional strategies.

1. Which literacy instructional strategies and foundational components are used at a higher level of instructional quality?

2. How does instructional quality and frequency of these strategies and components vary depending on: grade level, class size, teachers' years of experience, and teacher effectiveness (as rated on district evaluation tool)?
3. What are the perceptions of highly effective and effective teachers in Hessville School District as they describe effective instruction in literacy?

Discussion of Sample

Teachers were chosen to participate in this study based on their classroom growth data as demonstrated using the beginning of the year and end of the year tests of DIBELS. I initially asked only those teachers whose scores were one standard deviation above the mean of their grade level to participate. Of the 16 teachers who met this cut score, 12 teachers or 75%, agreed to participate in the study. Due to this small sample, 9 additional teachers were invited to participate with the goal of having three teachers per grade level represented. All 9 teachers, 100%, agreed to participate in this study. The additional teachers invited to participate had growth scores above the mean; however, they did not meet the one standard deviation above the mean indicator that the first group of teachers had met. The study included 21 teachers, 57% (12 teachers) whose scores were one standard deviation above the mean of their grade level and 43% (9 teachers) whose scores were above the mean, but not one standard deviation above the mean. The teaching experience of the study group ranged from three to 37 years. All teachers were rated either highly effective or effective on the prior school year's evaluation rubric. There were nine teachers who taught in classrooms that housed special education clusters, six teachers taught in classrooms with the English as a New Language clusters, two teachers taught in classrooms of high-ability students, and four teachers taught in classrooms made up of only general education

students. In Hessville School District, a cluster classroom is a classroom that has at least two students who have been identified through formal testing as requiring additional services.

Table 8

Teacher Sample

Years of Experience	0 – 6	7 – 11	12 – 17	18 – 37
	5 (23.8%)	5 (23.8%)	6 (28.6%)	5 (23.8%)

Classroom Type	Special Ed Cluster	English as a New Language Cluster	High Ability Cluster	General Education
	9 (42.9%)	6 (28.6%)	2 (9.5%)	4 (19.0%)

Effectiveness Rating	Highly Effective	Effective
	13 (61.9%)	8 (38.1%)

Grade Taught	Primary	Intermediate
	12 (57.1%)	9 (42.9%)

Class Size	15 – 22 Students	23 – 30 Students
	15 (71.4%)	6 (28.6%)

Note. $n = 21$

All classroom observations were completed during the first semester of the 2016 – 2017 school year. The observations took place during the 90-minute reading block. Observations lasted no more than 15 minutes. Interviews took place during the second semester of the 2016 – 2017 school year. These interviews were scheduled to last approximately 30 minutes. The majority of interviews were conducted in each teacher's classroom.

Results: Instructional Quality Overall

The first research question asked, which instructional strategies and foundational components are used at a higher level of instructional quality? It is important to note that it was not expected that all instructional strategies were used during each lesson. Therefore, there was a difference in the number of times certain strategies were used.

In chapter 2 of this study, I discussed, what I referred to as, foundational teaching components. These components—student engagement and classroom management —when utilized effectively, provide a base for teachers to then further utilize other instructional strategies. These foundational components were present in all classroom observations. Due to this, these components were observed and rated more than any of the instructional strategies.

In Table 9, the frequency of each strategy and component along with the mean rating of the instructional quality of each strategy and component are presented. As discussed above, student engagement and classroom management were observed in all 63 observations, and the remaining instructional strategies were not seen every time. The instructional strategy with the highest rating was explicit instruction, which was seen during 68% of the observations. The lowest rating was goal setting with a mean score that was lower than the rest and earned a rating of 0.33, on a scale from 1 – 3. A zero was recorded if a strategy was not observed. Removing goal setting from the results showed a range from highest to lowest mean of 0.53. The results from goal setting were different from the other instructional strategies in that strategy was not observed very often. This instructional strategy is discussed in greater depth in the qualitative portion of this chapter.

Table 9

Frequency and Average Rating of Instructional Quality

Teacher Trait	Number of Times Observed	Percentage of Times Observed	Average Rating of Instructional Quality	Mode
Student Engagement	63	100%	2.59	3.00
Classroom Management	63	100%	2.70	3.00
Questioning	53	84%	2.60	3.00
Use of Prior Knowledge	50	79%	2.47	2.00
Coaching	48	76%	2.35	2.00
Explicit Instruction	43	68%	2.71	3.00
Cooperative Learning	40	63%	2.18	0.00
Goal Setting	17	27%	0.33	0.00

Note. $N = 63$

Instructional quality by teacher trait. Research Question 2 asked, how does instructional quality and frequency of these strategies and components vary depending on grade level, class size, teacher's years of experience, effectiveness of teachers as rated on the district evaluation tool? I categorized these teacher traits into larger sets. For grade level, teachers were divided into two groups—primary teachers, which was made up of all kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers and intermediate teachers, which was made up of all third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers. For class size, there were two ranges—classrooms made up of 15 – 22 students and classrooms of 23 – 30 students. For years of experience, the ranges divided teachers into groups depending on whether they had taught 0 – 6 years, 7 – 11 years, 12 – 17 years, and 18 –

37 years. Teachers were grouped in this way so that approximately 25% of the teachers were in each group. With regard to teacher effectiveness, the teachers who participated in the study were rated either highly effective or effective; therefore, two groups were used.

The first part of Research Question 2 asked about the instructional quality based on grade level, class size, teachers' years of experience, and effectiveness of teachers as rated on the district evaluation tool. In Table 9, the results are presented by teacher trait compared to each instructional strategy and foundational component. As noted above, goal setting was low in all categories and is discussed in the qualitative portion of this chapter. The results shown in Table 10 provide the mean rating for the quality of each strategy/component based on teacher trait. The rating was based on a scale from 1 to 3. The standard deviation is also provided in parentheses in Table 10.

Table 10

Quality of Instructional Strategies

Teacher Trait	Student Engagement	Classroom Management	Cooperative Learning	Explicit Instruction	Use of Prior Knowledge	Questioning	Coaching	Goal Setting
Grade Level								
Primary	2.64	2.78	2.38	2.79	2.47	2.54	2.29	0.25
N = 12	(0.22)	(0.22)	(0.83)	(0.32)	(0.41)	(0.33)	(0.59)	(0.45)
Intermediate	2.52	2.59	1.93	2.59	2.48	2.69	2.43	0.44
N = 9	(0.47)	(0.51)	(1.15)	(0.30)	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.36)	(0.53)
Total	2.59	2.70	2.18	2.71	2.47	2.60	2.35	0.33
	(0.35)	(0.37)	(0.98)	(0.32)	(0.38)	(0.34)	(0.50)	(0.48)
Class Size								
15 - 22	2.60	2.77	2.39	2.73	2.39	2.59	2.36	0.33
Students	(0.29)	(0.33)	(0.76)	(0.36)	(0.35)	(0.34)	(0.56)	(0.49)
N = 15								
23 - 30	2.56	2.53	1.67	2.64	2.67	2.64	2.33	0.33
students	(0.50)	(0.45)	(1.33)	(0.19)	(0.41)	(0.37)	(0.37)	(0.52)
N = 6								
Total	2.59	2.70	2.18	2.71	2.47	2.60	2.35	0.33
	(0.35)	(0.37)	(0.98)	(0.32)	(0.38)	(0.34)	(0.50)	(0.48)

Table 10 (continued)

Teacher Trait	Student Engagement	Classroom Management	Cooperative Learning	Explicit Instruction	Use of Prior Knowledge	Questioning	Coaching	Goal Setting
Years of Experience								
0 - 6 years	2.60	2.87	2.13	2.53	2.50	2.53	2.27	0.20
N = 5	(0.28)	(0.18)	(1.26)	(0.36)	(0.35)	(0.38)	(0.51)	(0.45)
7 - 11 years	2.60	2.80	2.50	2.90	2.35	2.77	2.50	0.20
N = 5	(0.37)	(0.30)	(0.50)	(0.15)	(0.49)	(0.22)	(0.37)	(0.45)
12 - 17 years	2.56	2.58	2.11	2.67	2.44	2.58	2.22	0.17
N = 6	(0.40)	(0.44)	(1.08)	(0.41)	(0.33)	(0.33)	(0.69)	(0.41)
18 - 37 years	2.60	2.57	2.00	2.73	2.60	2.53	2.43	0.80
N = 5	(0.43)	(0.49)	(1.15)	(0.25)	(0.42)	(0.45)	(0.43)	(0.45)
Total	2.59	2.70	2.18	2.71	2.47	2.60	2.35	0.33
	(0.35)	(0.37)	(0.98)	(0.32)	(0.38)	(0.34)	(0.50)	(0.48)
Teacher Effectiveness								
Effective	2.71	2.73	2.31	2.77	2.66	2.69	2.63	0.25
N = 8	(0.33)	(0.44)	(1.03)	(0.22)	(0.44)	(0.23)	(0.33)	(0.46)
Highly	2.51	2.68	2.10	2.67	2.36	2.55	2.18	0.38
Effective	(0.35)	(0.35)	(0.98)	(0.37)	(0.30)	(0.39)	(0.52)	(0.51)
N = 13								
Total	2.59	2.70	2.18	2.71	2.47	2.60	2.35	0.33
	(0.35)	(0.37)	(0.98)	(0.32)	(0.38)	(0.34)	(0.50)	(0.48)
Type of Classroom								
General	2.75	2.63	2.08	3.00	2.71	2.83	1.92	0.50
Education	(0.32)	(0.55)	(1.42)	(0.00)	(0.34)	(0.19)	(0.69)	(0.58)
Classroom								
N = 4								
Special	2.52	2.74	2.20	2.67	2.45	2.65	2.37	0.44
Education	(0.38)	(0.28)	(0.90)	(0.33)	(0.32)	(0.34)	(0.34)	(0.53)
Cluster								
N = 9								
English as a	2.72	2.83	2.19	2.56	2.33	2.47	2.56	0.17
New	(0.25)	(0.28)	(1.14)	(0.33)	(0.41)	(0.34)	(0.55)	(0.41)
Language								
Cluster								
N = 6								
High Ability	2.17	2.25	2.25	2.75	2.50	2.34	2.50	0.00
Cluster	(0.24)	(0.59)	(0.35)	(0.35)	(0.71)	(0.47)	(0.24)	(0.00)
N = 2								
Total	2.59	2.70	2.18	2.71	2.47	2.60	2.35	0.33
	(0.35)	(0.37)	(0.98)	(0.32)	(0.38)	(0.34)	(0.50)	(0.48)

Instructional quality by grade level. Grade level was the first teacher trait examined. Primary teachers, those teaching grades kindergarten through second, and intermediate teachers, those teaching grades third through fifth, were very similar in the rating of instructional quality

of the strategy using prior knowledge with mean scores (*SD*) for primary teachers of 2.47 (0.41) and 2.48 (0.36) for intermediate teachers (intermediate) with a difference of only 0.01. The strategy that was the next closest in similarity was student engagement with a difference of 0.12 (primary = 2.64 (0.22), intermediate = 2.52 (0.47)).

The largest difference of instructional quality ratings between primary and intermediate teachers was for the strategy of cooperative learning. Primary teachers used cooperative learning at a higher level of instructional quality, evidenced by a mean of 2.38 (0.83), compared to a mean of 1.93 (1.15) for intermediate teachers, a difference of 0.45.

Of the seven strategies that were rated, primary teachers had a higher mean than intermediate teachers for four strategies (student engagement, classroom management, cooperative learning, and explicit instruction). Intermediate teachers had a higher mean than primary teachers for three strategies (use of prior knowledge, questioning, and coaching).

Instructional quality by class size. Class size was divided into two groups, smaller class sizes of 15 – 22 students and larger class sizes of 23 – 30 students. With the exception of the strategies use of prior knowledge and questioning, the classes of smaller size were rated higher for instructional quality in the other five areas of student engagement, classroom management, cooperative learning, explicit instruction, and coaching. Of the strategies with the highest instructional quality, smaller classrooms demonstrated the greatest difference in cooperative learning with a mean score of 2.39 (0.76), which was 0.72 higher than the larger class size mean score of 1.67 (1.33).

Instructional quality by years of experience. Years of experience was divided into four groups each containing approximately 25% of the teachers in the sample. The first group was made up of teachers with 0 – 6 years of experience (n = 5), the next group was teachers of 7

– 11 years of experience (*n* = 5), another group of teachers of 12 – 17 years of experience (*n* = 6), and the final group was made up of teachers with 18 – 37 years of experience (*n* = 5). Teachers with 7 – 11 years of experience had the highest mean in four of the seven categories (mean, *SD*): cooperative learning (2.50, 0.50), explicit instruction (2.90, 0.15), questioning (2.77, 0.22), and coaching (2.50, 0.37). Student engagement results showed the smallest difference of the strategies. The lowest mean for student engagement, earned by teachers with 12 – 17 years of experiences, was 2.56 (0.40), and the highest mean for student engagement, earned by the three other groups of teachers, was 2.60 (0.43).

The teachers with the least experience, 0 – 6 years, had the highest mean, 2.87 (0.18), for the strategy of classroom management and the most veteran teachers, 18 – 37 years, had the lowest mean, 2.57 (0.49), for the same strategy. The group of teachers who had 12 – 17 years of experience did not have the highest mean score in any category. They did, however, have the lowest mean in student engagement, 2.56 (0.40), and in coaching, 2.22(0.69).

Instructional quality by teacher effectiveness. Teacher effectiveness was based on the teacher evaluation rubric used by the Hessville School District. The evaluations were from the 2015-2016 school year as they were the most recent completed evaluations available. At the time of this writing, the evaluations for the 2016-2017 school year were still being completed. There were eight teachers rated as effective, and 13 rated as highly effective. In all seven categories, the effective teachers demonstrated higher mean scores than the highly-effective teachers did. The biggest difference was in the strategy of coaching where effective teachers' mean score of 2.63 (0.33) was 0.45 greater than highly-effective teachers' mean score of 2.18 (0.52). The smallest difference was seen in the strategy of classroom management where the

effective teachers' mean score of 2.73 (0.44) was 0.05 greater than highly-effective teachers' mean score of 2.68 (0.35).

Instructional quality by type of classroom. Within the sample, there were four types of classrooms—general education, special education cluster, English as a New Language cluster, and high ability cluster. The general education classrooms had the highest mean in four of the seven instructional strategies, student engagement, explicit instruction, use of prior knowledge, and questioning. In the area of explicit instruction, the general education classroom teachers had a mean score of 3.0, which was the highest possible score. For the English as a New Language cluster, they earned the lowest mean, 2.56 (0.33), for the strategy explicit instruction and use of prior knowledge, 2.33 (0.41). The High Ability cluster's ratings were the lowest for three instructional strategies including student engagement (2.17, 0.24), classroom management (2.25, 0.59), and questioning (2.34, 0.47).

Frequency by Teacher Trait

The second part of Research Question 2 asked about the frequency of instructional strategies and foundational components based on grade level, class size, teachers' years of experience, and effectiveness of teachers as rated on the district evaluation tool. In Appendix E, the results are presented by teacher trait and each instructional strategy with the frequency with which they were observed. Frequency is reported in percentages; the percentages represent how many times a strategy was seen divided by how many observations were conducted.

Student engagement and classroom management were seen in every classroom observation. Although the quality of these strategies varied from each observation and each teacher, they were foundational components that were seen in each classroom. For that reason,

the frequency of these two strategies were not included when considering the most frequently used strategies.

Frequency by grade level. Grade level consisted of primary: kindergarten, first, and second grade (n = 12) and intermediate: third, fourth, and fifth grade (n = 9) teachers. The most frequently observed strategy by primary teachers was questioning, with 97.1%. The most frequently observed strategy by intermediate teachers was coaching, which was seen in 85.2% of the observations. The second most commonly observed strategy, use of prior knowledge, was the same for primary (77.8%) and intermediate (81.5%). The use of cooperative learning was the least used strategy for both primary and intermediate teachers, which was seen in 58.3% and 70.4% of the observations.

Frequency by years of teaching. Years of experience was divided into four groups each containing approximately 25% of the teachers in the sample. The first group was made up of teachers with 0 – 6 years of experience (n = 5), the next group was teachers of 7 – 11 years of experience (n = 5), another group of teachers of 12 – 17 years of experience (n = 6), and the final group was made up of teachers with 18 – 37 years of experience (n = 5). The observations of the least experienced teachers, 0 – 6 years of experience, provided both the highest and lowest frequencies of any teacher group. Their use of questioning was seen in 93.3% of their observations, and cooperative learning was only noted to occur in 40.0% of the observations. The teachers with 7 – 11 years of experience were observed to use prior knowledge, explicit instruction, and questioning 80.0% of the time. Teachers with 18 – 37 years of experience demonstrated the use of all strategies at a higher frequency than the mean of all groups.

Frequency by teacher effectiveness. Teacher effectiveness was based on the teacher evaluation rubric used by the Hessville School District. As mentioned above, the evaluations

were from the 2015-2016 school year as they were the most recent completed evaluations available. There were eight teachers rated as effective, and 13 teachers rated as highly effective.

The most frequently used strategy of effective teachers was questioning (95.8%). The difference in frequency between effective and highly-effective teachers was 18.9%. The highly-effective teachers used the strategy of connecting prior knowledge in 79.5% of the observations. This was higher than the effective teachers by 0.3%. The strategy used the least frequently by both groups (63.5%) was cooperative learning, which was only used during 54.2% of the observations of the effective teachers and in 69.2% of the observations of highly-effective teachers.

Frequency by type of classroom. Within the sample, there were four types of classrooms—general education, special education cluster, English as a New Language cluster, and high ability cluster. For three groups, general education (97.1%), special education (81.5%), and high ability (100.0%), the strategy of using prior knowledge was their most frequently used strategy. Two of the groups mentioned as using prior knowledge the most frequently also had another strategy used an equal number of times. High ability classrooms also demonstrated using coaching in 100.0% of the observations. Special education classrooms were observed using questioning 81.5% of the time. When considering all strategies, the special education classrooms were above the mean of all groups in every category except questioning. However, questioning was one of the most frequently observed strategies for this group.

The quantitative data provided information on the quality of instructional strategies as well as information about the frequency with which strategies were used in the classroom. To provide a richer understanding of the teachers and their instruction, interviews were conducted

following the observations. The qualitative data collected will provide a different perspective of these same teachers and their perceptions.

Qualitative Findings

Twenty-one interviews were conducted with the teachers who participated in the study. The interviews were conducted after each teacher's three observations were finished. Teachers were asked about the 90-minute reading block, goal setting, and what effective literacy instruction looked like according to them, not their school district's view. Teacher responses were then related to Cohen, Raudenbush, and Ball's (2003) framework for instruction. When explaining instruction, Cohen et al. used the term teaching in place of instruction and stated, "Teaching is what teachers do, say, and think with learners, concerning content, in particular organizations and other environments in time. Teaching is a collection of practices, including pedagogy, learning instructional design, and managing organization" (p. 124). The teachers were forthcoming in their responses and many were very detailed in their answers. There were instances where teachers used terminology specific to their school district during the interviews. Clarification of these terms is provided in parentheses.

90-Minute Reading Block

During each interview, each teacher was asked to describe what happens in her classroom during the 90-minute reading block. In the state of Indiana, Indiana Code 511 IAC 6.2-3.1-4 requires that, "Reading instruction for all students in kindergarten through third grade must include the following. . . A dedicated, uninterrupted minimum ninety (90) minute block of time daily to all students" (Rund, 2015, 1321). In all instances, teachers reported the 90-minute reading block included whole group instruction and teacher led small groups. In all but one classroom, literacy stations were also a part of the daily reading block. Literacy stations were

used for reinforcement of skills previously taught. Students participated in learning stations independently, in pairs, or in small groups.

Teachers described spending time every day during the 90-minute reading block providing whole group instruction to students. This time varied from 15 to 45 minutes. In most instances, the teachers described using the whole group instruction time to go over "Amazing Words" (vocabulary), to teach a comprehension skill or strategy, and to practice a new skill.

With one exception, all teachers in the study reported using stations in their classrooms on a daily basis. The stations varied by classroom ranging from two to six students participating in a station at the same time. The time spent in each station was also varied with a range from 10 to 20 minutes. Stations were described as tasks students could complete independently, with a partner, or a small group, which reinforced previously taught vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and close reading skills.

During the time students were in stations, the teachers reported that they met with small groups of students. The majority of these small groups were described as homogeneous so the teacher could provide instruction to students at their instructional level. Many teachers reported meeting with their "low" students every day. This trend of meeting with students identified as low was described by a first grade teacher,

> I don't see everybody every day. I see certain kids every day. My low-low [sic] student doesn't go to read-to-self first every morning. He comes to the teacher table instead because having him read to himself is a little more challenging.

These teacher-led small groups provided direct instruction on comprehension skills and provide students with an opportunity for guided practice.

As stated above, there was one teacher who did not utilize stations in her classroom. The teacher reported she had made a change last year with support from her principal to eliminate station work. She observed that, ". . .a lot of kids were off task." With guidance from her principal, she met with her lowest students in a small group each day, thus, this intermediate teacher did not use stations during her 90-minute reading block. The 90-minute reading block was used for whole group instruction and independent work time for students. During the independent work time, she met with her lowest achieving students as the other students completed independent tasks.

Goal Setting

Prior to beginning data collection, I conducted a pilot to test the observation tool. One area I focused on was the use of goal setting. During the pilot, it was difficult to ascertain how goal setting was used within each classroom and to what extent students were aware of the goals that were set for the classroom and for each individual student. There was some observable evidence of goal setting, generally seen as posters or displays; however, specific details were not apparent. Due to that early experience, rather than looking for goal setting in each classroom during the observations, teachers were asked about goal setting during the interview.

More than half of the teachers, 15 of the 21 interviewed, reported using goal setting with students. Goal setting was explained as a way to keep students on track and to help them see what they needed to achieve by the end of the year. For higher-performing students, teachers felt it was important for them to have something to work toward even though they may have already achieved the end of the year grade-level goal. Some of these teachers reported using goal setting with students who struggled or who were trying to meet a particular goal. The goals helped

students see what the desired outcome was for either the school year or a shorter time period. For instance, one second grade teacher stated,

> So that it doesn't seem so daunting for the kiddos who are pretty well below benchmark coming in at the beginning of the year. . . I want you to increase 20 more words by the middle of the year. I can check in with them each week with a progress monitoring on DIBELS every other week, and they mark that on their bar graph.

The measures teachers reported they used to goal set in the area of reading included DIBELS, SRI (Scholastic Reading Inventory – A reading comprehension assessment that provides a Lexile measure, reading level, after the assessment), Reading A – Z (a component of Learning A-Z which includes leveled readers and assessments to teacher guided reading, reading proficiency, and fluency), and/or Reading Counts (Scholastic reading program which encourages independent reading) points. Of the teachers who used goal setting with students, the way in which the goals were managed varied from using student data folders, which the students managed, or the teacher kept track of the data. The teacher-kept goals were then used for discussion with students and teachers when they met in a one-on-one setting.

None of the kindergarten teachers interviewed indicated that they used formal goal setting. While the kindergarten teachers did not set goals with students, they all indicated they worked with students to help them understand the purpose and reason behind their learning. One kindergarten teacher answered, "We talk about why we do things a lot so we talk about the purpose so when we're reading, we talk about we get better at reading so we're fluent when we read smoothly and correctly."

Effective Literacy Instruction

Teachers were asked to describe what the most effective literacy instruction looked like to them. They were instructed not to be concerned about their school district's vision for effective literary. From their answers, two common themes emerged. Of the 21 interviews conducted, 11 teachers indicated effective literacy instruction would include differentiation. Of these 11 teachers, 10 of them taught primary students, and only one taught intermediate students. Additionally, nine teachers felt that providing students frequent opportunities to read different genres of books would be another component of effective literacy instruction. Of these nine teachers, three were primary teachers and six were intermediate teachers.

Differentiation

Teachers described differentiation as a time to provide students with instruction that was at their level. Most described this happening in small teacher-led groups; they felt their most effective instructional times happened during this time since they were able to focus on the specific needs of the students in the small group. The teachers described students coming to them with a wide range of abilities and ensuring that students' needs were met. Teachers expressed the need for flexibility with curriculum maps so that students who required extra support had the time to learn before having to move on to the next concept. A second grade teacher stated, "It [instruction] has to be differentiated or they [students] can't meet their goals." Teachers felt that differentiation led to more students being engaged during learning since the work was at the appropriate instructional level.

Frequent Opportunities with Different Genres

Teachers, who reported the need for frequent opportunities to read different genres, described the need to provide students with time to read without providing instruction around the

text being read. They stated that although direct instruction around the books students read was not provided, conversation about what the students read was required. Teachers felt the time they provided to students to read helped students develop a "love of reading." They stated that students needed to experience a wide variety of genres so students are exposed to more than just realistic fiction. One fifth grade teacher described reading historical fiction to her students because it was not something they had chosen on their own. After she exposed them to historical fiction, she reported, "Now they're begging me [to read historical fiction]. I mean they are just constantly wanting to read about things in history." Teachers reported sharing different genres through read alouds. They stated this was a good way to introduce genres to students and also provide a good model of fluent reading to students.

Cohen, Raudenbush, and Ball Framework

Cohen et al. (2003) described the instruction as the interconnectedness of teachers, students, content, and environments. There were three different interactions that were reported by teachers during interviews: teachers and content (resources), teachers and environments, and teachers and students. The instruction in which students engage at the elementary level helps build a foundation that will serve them throughout their educational career and their lives. It is important that students engage in instruction that is meaningful, engaging, and builds upon the skills and experiences students bring with them to school (Graham & Hebert, 2011). In order to provide this foundation, it is important to understand the intricacies of the interactions of teachers, students, content, and environments, especially the interactions of those teachers whose students demonstrate high academic growth.

Cohen et al. (2003) referred to resources as "money or the things that money buys, including books, buildings, libraries, teachers' formal qualifications, and more" (p. 120). For

this study, I considered resources to be instructional materials purchased by Hessville School District. There was an expectation that the curricular materials used across the district were the same. This similarity of instructional resources was mentioned in Chapter 2 and was a reason this school district was chosen for this study. Because the curricular materials used in classrooms were consistent, the differences observed between classrooms were the interaction between students and teachers not the curricular materials. The teachers in this study shared a small list of resources they used during their 90-minute reading block. Several of the items mentioned were the same across all grade levels, kindergarten through fifth grade. These items included: Reading Street, Amazing Words, and DIBELS, which were mentioned in Chapter 1. There were minor differences mentioned between primary and intermediate classrooms. In primary classrooms, RAZ Kids was used on a regular basis. In intermediate classrooms, Story Works was used regularly. Despite the consistency of materials, teachers reported using the materials in different ways. One teacher reported using Reading Street materials during literacy games in small groups and another reported using Reading Street during whole group introduction of comprehension skill activities. DIBELS was reported as being used to obtain benchmark scores for the beginning, middle, and end of the year by all teachers. However, there were some teachers who did much more with DIBELS and fluency. A first grade teacher stated, "I meet with all of my kids every single day, so I can do DIBELS; I can do running records or something like that, so I can meet with all of my kids every single day." (Note that Reading Street, DIBELS, and Amazing Words were defined and discussed in Chapter 1).

It is important to note that although the district utilized the same resources, the way in which teachers used them varied. However, the basic instructional components from the resources were the same in all classrooms. This sameness helps to decrease the number of

factors to be considered when studying student achievement. If the resources were different, it would become necessary to consider whether it was the resources that impacted student achievement rather than the interactions between the teachers and students.

Additionally, Cohen et al. (2003) reported that the effects of (content) resources depended partly on the knowledge of teachers. The use of resources by teachers would be impacted on the knowledge level of a teacher for a particular subject. For example,

> Teachers who know a subject well, and know how to make it accessible to learners, will be more likely to make good use of a mathematics text, to use it to frame tasks productively and use students' work well, than teachers who don't know the subject, or know it but not how to open it to learners. (Cohen et al., 2003, p. 125)

One teacher interviewed stated, "I don't feel like I have enough knowledge. I have knowledge, but my experience is still low." This comment came from a teacher in the early stages of her career with fewer than five years of experience. A kindergarten teacher with six years of experience explained the difference in her knowledge as a teacher by stating, "I didn't know my first year or second year what I really was doing. After four years or so, I really adapted. I researched and worked with colleagues and my coach for different approaches when working with students." This teacher continued to explain how she had become more knowledgeable in ways to work with students, including English language learners who continue to stretch her as a teacher.

In contrast, a teacher with 23 years of experience reflected on reading instruction using different resources because of the knowledge she had gained during her tenure that students needed instruction using more than just the basal text. She stated,

> We are really going to have to look (at options for other textbooks) because Reading Street isn't going to cut it. The text is getting easy. Our kids are getting like 95s, 100s, 90s, and we don't have to prompt them to get it.

This teacher continued to explain that as the students in her class become more proficient, resources may have to be changed to meet the higher levels of student performance. The most veteran teacher in the study had 37 years of experience and did not speak specifically about her knowledge of content. However, her answers provided details about what she did differently for students based on their needs. This is done through her knowledge of the content and her proficiency with resources. She said,

> I go through and figure out who to help them (students) do the best for themselves. I use some strategies with this student, but not others. I have some students do all stations, but others focus on the stations in areas of weakness only. If I think to myself, 'What do you know as a fifth grader about yourself and how can that help you?'

Teachers with more years of experience seem to have a knowledge of content that appears to be utilized without conscious thought. They describe their interactions with students without giving credit to the level of skills that they have developed. The teachers with fewer years of experience discuss their lack of knowledge and describe their need to become proficient with content.

Cohen et al. (2003) described environments as, "external influences including other teachers, school leaders, district policies, state requirement" (p. 127). The interviews did not produce many examples of interaction between teachers and environments. Of the 21 teachers interviewed, only two kindergarten teachers mentioned the district's required curriculum maps. When asked what was required for effective literacy instruction, one teacher stated, "Having

some flexibility within the curriculum map I think is the most effective just based on your class." The other mentioned using the curriculum map as a way to stay on track with what was required to be taught.

Another external influence—environment—that was mentioned by multiple teachers was the different school experiences children bring to a classroom. As a growing school district, Hessville teachers receive new students from surrounding school districts each year. One first-grade teacher reported,

> I've got kiddos doing sight word work when they are working with the words "in" and "it" because that's the level where they are at. I've got kids with Lexiles at 600-700 so obviously they need a different activity, so I think whatever work you give them needs to be at their level.

A similar situation was reported by a fourth-grade teacher,

> I think the biggest thing I worry about is what do you do with kiddos who don't have the foundational skills and they're in fourth grade and how far back do you, you know? I mean, I struggle with that daily.

The final interaction to consider from the framework was the relationship between teachers and students. This interaction was quantified during the observation portion of the study through the collection of data of the frequency and the instructional quality of the interactions between teachers and students as evidenced through the use of foundational components and instructional strategies. Teacher interviews provided a more in-depth view of this interaction. Cohen et al. (2003) explained, "Instruction consists of more or less complex interactions among teacher, learners, and content" (p. 126). These interactions occur in small group and whole group settings. All teachers interviewed described meeting with their lowest

achieving students daily in small groups. Small group instruction was described by allowing teachers to cater to students at their level. One first-grade teacher explained her process for meeting with students, "I see certain kids every day. My low-low student comes to the teacher table every morning. I'll meet with my strategic and intensive kids every day and rotate between my middle and high kids every other day." This sentiment is the same from primary to intermediate teachers and with teachers of all levels of experience. A fifth grade teacher stated, "My low kids meet with at least one adult every day in a small group setting." This teacher had a special education cluster in her class and received support from the special education department on a daily basis.

In addition to the interaction based on student need, teachers described their interaction with students when considering goal setting and the purpose for learning. Kindergarten teachers did not set goals with students, but they did help students to understand there was a purpose behind what they learned. These teachers felt students who knew the purpose behind what they were learning were more confident in their abilities and had a better outlook on learning. An intermediate teacher reported that she shared her grade level's goals with her students to help them understand her expectation for them and the other students in the grade level who were not in the class. She stated,

> They know what the end goal is for the entire grade level. In order for our grade level to be there, our class needs to be at 100%. I think goal setting, for us, is just constantly talking with them about it, not necessarily written goals.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to provide quantitative and qualitative data from the observations and interviews that were conducted to respond to my research questions. During

the observations and interviews, I was able to gain a better understanding about the instructional strategies and foundational components used by the teachers in Hessville School District.

When considering the quantitative and qualitative data together, I found the answers given by the teachers in response to the questions they were asked were consistent with what I systematically observed in their classrooms. The observation tool required me to keep track of instructional strategies that were not discussed in the interviews. Additionally, there were questions in the interview that were not observed as part of the observation tool. Due to this, there were some quantitative data that were not supported through interview responses, and qualitative data that did not support nor disprove what was found in the quantitative data collection.

Teachers stated they felt that differentiation and frequent opportunities to read different genres of books are two critical components of effective literacy instruction. Although not measured during the observations, differentiation was observed in the majority of observations. Additionally, the literacy stations provided an opportunity to observe the numerous texts of varying genres to which students were exposed.

The foundational components of student engagement and classroom management produced expected results. Classroom management and student engagement had instructional quality mean ratings that placed them as the second and fourth highest-rated strategy/component when compared to the other instructional strategies.

Explicit instruction was shown to be the strategy that was utilized at the highest level of instructional quality when looking at teachers as a whole. The quality of this strategy was higher than the foundational components of classroom management and student engagement. Explicit

instruction ratings for the teachers with the special education and English as a New Language cluster were the lowest scores in the type of classroom category.

The mean scores for teachers rated effective were higher than the mean scores of the teachers rated highly effective for every instructional strategy. This finding is discussed in depth in Chapter 5.

The qualitative data provided a picture of the 90-minute reading block and the consistencies found between all of the teachers. All teachers reported using teacher-led small groups to meet the varied needs of their students. Twenty of the teachers reported using literacy stations as part of their daily reading block. The idea of literacy stations is also discussed in more depth in Chapter 5.

Although many teachers reported using goal setting with their students, there was little visual evidence of goal setting in classrooms. It might be important to note that the lack of visualization of goal setting does not mean that it is not happening in classrooms. Although only one school posted the DIBELS goals for beginning, middle, and end of the year, teachers who did not teach at that school reported using goal setting with their students. This would be a topic where further research is warranted.

Cohen et al. (2003) described instruction as the interconnectedness of teachers, students, content, and environments. Teachers reported using the same content (resources) in all classrooms and across grade levels. How they used these materials and the frequency with which these materials varied. Early career teachers reported using only the resources they were given. In contrast, teachers with the most experience reported using the standard materials but also knew when additional materials needed to be added to meet the higher levels of student performance.

The interconnectedness of teachers and students that was the most commonly described was through the use of small group instruction. Teachers detailed meeting in small groups with their students who were the lowest academically every day. This small group instruction provided differentiated instruction provided by the classroom teachers that was on the academic level needed for these students. Although teachers indicated they met with all of their students in small groups, only those students with the greatest level of need were met with daily. Chapter 5 contains a discussion of the results, implications for research and policy, and recommendations for further research from this study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND FURTHER IMPLICATIONS

This chapter provides an overview of the problem, the methods, and the quantitative and qualitative findings. The findings of this study are situated within the literature presented in Chapter 2, including similarities and differences, contradictions, and any findings of special importance. Implications of this study as it relates to further research, theory, practice, and policy is also examined.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe which instructional strategies were the most prevalent and at a higher level of instructional quality in classrooms of teachers who have shown above average student growth as measured through DIBELS. Another purpose was to discern if there was a difference in the instructional quality of teachers who were rated highly effective compared to those rated effective. The research question answered was, Which instructional strategies are the most prevalent in the classrooms of elementary teachers with high student achievement growth? In order to answer this overarching question, there were several additional questions which, when answered, provided a richer understanding of instructional strategies.

1. Which literacy instructional strategies and foundational components are used at a higher level of instructional quality?
2. How does instructional quality and frequency of these strategies and components vary depending on: grade level, class size, teachers' years of experience, and teacher effectiveness (as rated on district evaluation tool)?
3. What are the perceptions of highly effective and effective teachers in Hessville School District as they describe effective instruction in literacy?

Teachers were chosen to be part of the study based on their growth data from beginning to the end of the year using the DIBELS composite mean for their students. Teachers' growth data were then disaggregated by grade level, and the mean and standard deviation were calculated. Teachers whose scores were one standard deviation above the mean were invited to participate in the study. There were 21 teachers who agreed to participate in the study, which consisted of three classroom observations and one interview. A mixed methods approach was utilized. The quantitative data were collected during classroom observations where a rubric was completed based on the instructional strategies used. Each strategy that was observed was given a rating based on a 1 – 3 point scale. If a strategy was not observed, no score was given.

The qualitative data were collected once the observations were completed. Interviews were conducted with each teacher where I asked about the 90-minute reading block, goal setting, and their views on effective literacy instruction. These data along, with the quantitative data, were analyzed and provided findings and outcomes discussed in Chapter 4.

Foundational Teaching Components

In the literature review (Chapter 2), I identified student engagement and classroom management as foundational teaching components. These components can be seen as foundational to an effective classroom; they are often put into place before subject-specific instruction can take place. This base of critical components does not develop without the purposeful and repetitive work of the classroom teacher. Should a teacher not develop and utilize these components effectively in the classroom, the base begins to erode and the ability to provide meaningful instruction is limited. To be skillful at instructional strategies without having these components firmly established could limit the amount of uninterrupted class time

for instruction. Maximizing time on task for students results when a strong base has been established.

Throughout the observations conducted for this study, classroom management and student engagement were observed every time. Thus, the frequency reported provides less of an accurate measure as do the ratings they received for instructional quality. In regard to instructional quality, classroom management was rated second behind the instructional strategy of explicit instruction, and student engagement was rated fourth behind the instructional strategy of questioning. This finding further supports the idea that these are foundational teaching components. There were additional findings where data collected for foundational teaching components and instructional strategies were analyzed together. Those findings are reported in the Key Findings section of this chapter.

Key Findings

Research Question 1 asked which instructional strategies and foundational components were used at a higher level of instructional quality. Explicit instruction, classroom management, and questioning were the top three rated instructional strategies/foundational components. According to Hattie (2009), these three instructional strategies/foundational components were strategies that have a hinge point of $d = 0.40$ or higher. Hattie stated that any hinge point greater than $d = 0.40$ places that strategy or component in the "zone of desired effects as these are the influences that have the greatest impact on student achievement outcomes," (Hattie, 2009, p. 19). Hattie's research provided hinge points for explicit instruction of $d = 0.75$ (teacher clarity), classroom management of $d = 0.52$, and questioning of $d = 0.46$. It is important to note that classroom management was rated in all observations ($n = 63$), questioning was rated 53 times, and explicit instruction was only rated 43 times. Classroom management was described in my

literature review as a foundational teaching component. The placement of classroom management in the top three further supports the idea that these foundational teaching components must be well developed and evident in an effective classroom. It was also found that with only one exception (use of prior knowledge), the instructional quality of strategies was higher with smaller class sizes than in larger class sizes.

When considering instructional quality as it relates to years of experience, it was interesting to note that teachers with 7 – 11 years of experience demonstrated the highest mean in four of the eight instructional strategies/foundational components (cooperative learning, explicit instruction, questioning, and coaching). The most veteran teachers demonstrated the highest mean in only two categories; student engagement with a rating of 2.60, which was the same as two other bands of years of experience, and use of prior knowledge with a rating of 2.60. Rivkin, Hanushek, and Kain (2005) found, "There appear to be important gains in teaching quality in the first year of experience. . . .However, there is little evidence that improvements continue after the first three years" (p. 449). In contrast, Clodfelter, Ladd, and Vigdor (2006) found the peak between teacher experience and student achievement to occur, ". . .with teachers having between 13 and 26 years of experience" (p. 16). The results of this study for teachers with 7 – 11 years of experience showing the highest mean of instructional quality in five of the eight instructional strategies/foundation components fall outside of the findings of both of these studies, but between the ranges of the two studies.

In this study, explicit instruction was used at a higher level of instructional quality in a general education classroom than in classrooms with special education or English as a New Language cluster. In general education classrooms, the mean of instructional quality was 3.0, the highest possible mean. For cluster classrooms for special education and English as a New

Language classroom, their means were 2.67 and 2.56 respectively. Boyles (2002) explained teachers used explicit instruction to help students master a concept by breaking the concept down to its key components. This strategy, when used masterfully, should provide time for students to practice a concept and time for teachers to monitor student progress and provide feedback. Explicit instruction should be at a higher level of instructional quality in classrooms where student needs are greater, such as special education or English as a New Language students.

Research Question 2 focused on quality and frequency of instructional strategies/foundational components depending on teacher traits. The most compelling findings for this research question involved the quality of instruction compared to years of experience and teacher effectiveness. Teachers who had been teaching 7 – 11 years had the highest mean results on four of the eight strategies/components observed (cooperative learning, explicit instruction, questioning, and coaching, they tied for the highest for student engagement). Conversely, teachers who had been teaching 12 – 17 years did not have the highest mean for any of the instructional strategies/foundational components. This finding was another point in contrast with the findings of Clodfelter et al. (2006) who found teachers reached their peak between 13 and 26 years. For all eight instructional strategies/foundational components, teachers rated as effective had a higher mean score than those teachers rated highly effective. Stronge (2002) stated there were three characteristics of effective teachers: relationships with students, organization of the classroom, and organization of instruction. As only the organization of instruction was considered in this study, Stronge's findings could be supported by the finding that the instructional quality for highly effective teachers was less than the instructional quality for effective teachers. The teacher evaluation tool for Hessville School District included four

domains: professional responsibilities, instruction, classroom environment, and planning and preparing for learning. Only one domain specifically considers instruction.

Research Question 2 also considered the frequency of instructional strategies. The instructional strategy, cooperative learning, subset of student grouping, was the least used instructional strategy/component for both primary and intermediate teachers. Cooperative learning is defined as, "the instructional use of small groups so that students can work together to accomplish a common purpose and maximize their own and others' learning" (Bromley & Modlo, 1997, p. 22). As one part of their Instruction as Interaction model, Cohen et al. (2003) described the interdependence of teachers and students, as well as students with other students, as a fluid system where students and teachers use their relationships with one another to make judgments about how and when to use resources. These resources are not always curricular materials, but can also be other people. Cooperative learning requires these relationships and works to develop the understanding of when and how to use resources. It is important to note that all observations took place during the first semester of a school year. It is possible that cooperative learning would have been used more frequently during the second semester as teachers and students had used the first semester to develop the relationships between students and between students and resources.

Goal setting was an instructional strategy that was considered during this study. Evidence of goal setting was looked for in all classroom observations. Evidence was only found in 17 of the 63 classroom observations. However, it was reported by more than half of the teachers in the study (15 of the 21) that goal setting was used with students. Locke and Lathan (1990) emphasized the importance of setting challenging goals. Goal setting along with

feedback from the teacher to the students can lead to higher student achievement. Hattie (2009) found goal setting to have a hinge point of $d = 0.56$.

When considering the frequency of use of instructional strategies/foundational components by the most veteran teachers (18 – 37 years) demonstrated the use of all strategies/components at a higher frequency than the mean of all of the groups. The teachers with the least experience (0 – 6 years) showed a frequency of use less than the mean of all groups for all strategies/components except for the strategy of questioning. It is possible that the low scores of the teachers with the least experience is due to their lack of experience in using these strategies/components.

Research Question 3 considered the qualitative data teachers provided during their interviews. Teachers described effective instruction as instruction containing differentiation and exposure to different genres of text. Differentiation was not one of the instructional strategies that was rated during the observation portion of this study; however, it was observed in many classrooms. Exposure to different genres of text did not fit my definition of instructional strategy used in this study. Gambrel (2011) stated, "Motivation to read and reading achievement are higher when the classroom environment is rich in reading materials and includes books from an array of genres" (p. 173). However, Gambrel also indicated that providing multiple genres alone does not increase reading achievement. Teachers should provide an introduction to students of a variety of genres which assists in "raising their interest and curiosity" (Gambrel, 2011, p. 174).

Teachers described connections with students and content. In considering the interview data as it related to Cohen et al.'s framework for instruction, this study further supported the connectedness of teachers, students, content, and environments. The teachers' work with content showed little difference in the resources that were utilized from classroom to classroom. The

biggest difference came in the way in which teachers described how they used these resources. Some used resources on a daily basis as a touchstone for their direct instruction. Others used the same resources as part of student-led stations with little guidance from the teacher. Cohen et al. (2003) stated, "The best materials are of little use if teachers cannot turn them to advantage in framing tasks or if students cannot use them to engage the tasks" (p. 124). The teachers were able to use the materials in such a way that best met the needs of their individual classrooms based on the teacher knowledge and experience.

The connectedness between teachers and students was described throughout many interviews. Teachers reported knowing the needs of their students and using instructional strategies that supported the students at their level and worked to move them forward. "Teachers calibrate instruction to their view of students' capabilities, and their own capabilities to teach" (Cohen et al., 2003, p. 132). This connectedness was also explained by teachers as they explained ways in which they motivated students to learn whether through goal setting, establishing the purpose for learning, or through discussion of daily objectives.

Implications for Further Research

Although much research has been conducted regarding the impact of class size on student achievement, there does not seem to be a consensus on whether or not class size impacts student achievement. Borland, Howsen, and Trawick (2005) conducted a study on the impact of class size on student achievement, which they reported provided more accurate data than previous studies since their data were not averages or district level numbers. Rather their data were from actual classroom counts of students and teachers. Their study suggested that class size does not necessarily impact student achievement. In contrast, the Tennessee STAR study found that smaller classes impact student achievement, especially in the early grades (kindergarten through

third grade). The Tennessee STAR study also showed that minority groups benefitted from small class size (Mosteller, 1995). However, in this study, with the exception of use of prior knowledge, the instructional quality of strategies was higher with smaller class sizes than in larger class sizes. This research study could be used in future studies to help support the claim of smaller class sizes positively impacting student achievement.

When considering instructional quality as it relates to years of experience, it was interesting to note that teachers with 7 – 11 years of experience demonstrated the highest mean in four of the eight instructional strategies/foundational components (cooperative learning, explicit instruction, questioning, and coaching). Is this due to having mastered the understanding of how to use each of the strategies/components in an effective way? If this is the case, why are the more veteran teachers not demonstrating instructional quality as that same level? It is possible more veteran teachers have moved away from the basics of professional development, which are offered to beginning teachers and are looking for other strategies and skills that do not impact every day instruction. Louws, van Veen, Meirink, and van Driel (2017) found that teachers who have taught longer are interested in different learning goals. Mid-career teachers are looking outside of the classroom for new challenges, roles, and responsibilities. Further research could investigate the frequency of professional development offered to teachers new to the profession versus what is offered to more veteran teachers. Additional research could also investigate the content of the professional development that is offered to teachers based on their years of experience.

Marzano et al. (2001) suggested that feedback to students should include what is working well and what needs to be changed to achieve a particular goal. However, in this study, little evidence was noted during classroom observations to show goal setting took place. Many

teachers reported using goal setting and were able to describe their conversations with students about achieving their goals. This instructional strategy was reported as not being used at all in kindergarten classrooms that were part of this study. The kindergarten teachers stated they shared the purpose and reason for learning with students rather than setting goals. It would be interesting to know if there was a difference in student achievement in classrooms were goal setting was overt in comparison to classrooms where goal setting was not.

Implications for Practice

In Hattie's (2009) work, explicit instruction (teacher clarity) had a hinge point of d = 0.75. Any hinge point over 0.40 placed a strategy in the "zone of desired effects as these are the influences that have the greatest impact on student achievement outcomes" (Hattie, 2009, p. 19). Although explicit instruction was the strategy that had the highest mean for instructional quality for high growth teachers in Hessville, it was not used as frequently as some of the other strategies. This might be an area where additional focus is placed on explicit instruction during professional development opportunities.

Anderson et al. (1979) stated, "Good classroom management that keeps students involved and prevents problems is essential if achievement gains are to occur" (p. 216). In this study, the teachers with the least experience (0 – 6 years) had the highest mean and the most veteran teachers (18 – 37 years) had the lowest mean for instructional quality. It is possible that this was due to new teachers trying to establish the routines and procedures needed while using more regimented structure to achieve this. Thus, their classroom management is more visible and clearly defined. It is possible that resources are being directed to new teacher induction. Wong (2004) stated that induction is "a comprehensive, multiyear process designed to train and acculturate new teachers in the academic standards and vision of the district" (p. 48).

More veteran teachers may not place as much emphasis on classroom management. Garrahy and Cothran (2005) interviewed teachers and their use of classroom management. Veteran teachers reported their attitudes toward classroom management changed the longer they taught. One teacher stated, "I try to get to know the kids better from a personal standpoint. I'm less autocratic and more democratic," (p. 59). These veteran teachers also felt as they gained confidence in teaching, they were able to focus more on student needs and behaviors. If school districts devote resources to new teacher induction, there is the potential of limited resources being left for veteran teacher professional development. Professional development for veteran teachers may then be inadequate to fully address their varied needs.

Hall (2002) described explicit instruction as an instructional approach with specific design and delivery procedures. This idea is often simplified using the language: I do (teacher), we do (teacher and students), and you do (students). This type of instruction includes modeling of thought process and problem solving. In this study, it was found that explicit instruction was used at a higher level of instructional quality in a general education classroom than in classrooms with special education or English as a New Language cluster. If this study were repeated and the findings were the same, it would be important to begin work with the cluster teachers to ensure that professional development for this instructional strategy was provided and modeled for teachers who are responsible for cluster groups.

Implications for Policy (District/Federal)

Stronge (2002) demonstrated that there were many characteristics that make up an effective teacher. These included interpersonal skills of a teacher, organization of the classroom, and organization of instruction. In my study, I did not consider the interpersonal skills of the teacher. The lack of consideration of the interpersonal skills could be a reason that the teachers

rated as highly effective had mean scores for instructional quality that were lower than those teachers rated effective for all instructional strategies. The district evaluation tool consisted of four domains, only one of which is instruction. Within each of these domains there are specific indicators which administrators use to evaluate teachers. There are eight indicators in the area of instruction, and there are 15 indicators within the other three sections. It is possible for a teacher to be highly effective in instruction and yet not in the other three areas which would cause the overall evaluation of that teacher to be effective rather than highly effective. Conversely, it is possible for a teacher to be rated as effective on all eight indicators with the domain of instruction, and still be highly effective on the 15 indicators outside of instruction.

District policy calls for teachers to be rated highly effective if they receive 13 of more indicators marked as highly effective. As it stands now, teachers can accomplish that if they are only rated as effective in the area of instruction, if the other indicators outside of instruction are rated as highly effective. A change in rating may need to be considered possibly weighting the impact of the domain of instruction.

A school district will need to determine if the effectiveness of a teacher should be based on instruction only or if it should encompass other indicators. Some districts evaluate teachers based only on instruction. Other districts, like Hessville School District, evaluate teachers on instruction along with professional responsibilities, classroom environment, and planning for learning. These additional domains cause the focus of teacher effectiveness to be spread out and the quality of instruction is not as much of an indicator as it might be elsewhere.

Summary

This study was conducted in a suburban school district. The findings presented may reflect that limitation. The study was intended to provide clarity on effective instructional

strategies in literacy and their impact on student achievement. The findings show explicit instruction to be the strategy rated as the highest in instructional quality. Classroom management and student engagement, both described as foundational teaching components, were found to be highly rated in instructional quality even though they received a rating in every evaluation. Additional research may be warranted regarding teacher evaluation and whether or not evaluation of teachers should focus on instruction only. Further research along with the possibility of an impact on practice might also be considered in the area of quality of instruction when considering the years of experience of a teacher and instructional quality. Do veteran teachers need professional development in instructional areas that seem basic and foundational in nature? There is much still to be learned in the area of instruction. The more that is understood about the impact of instruction and instructional strategies on student achievement, the more professional development can be designed around those strategies that have the greatest impact on students.

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APPENDIX A: DIBELS TESTS ADMINISTERED BY GRADE LEVEL

CTL Center on Teaching & Learning
UO DIBELS Data System

Parent Guide to DIBELS Assessment

The DIBELS measures include six individual tests that focus on the big ideas and critical skills of beginning reading.

Big Idea	What is it? Why is it important?	DIBELS Measures	Grades Assessed						
			K	1	2	3	4	5	6
Phonemic Awareness	Phonemic awareness refers to your child's ability to hear and manipulate sounds in spoken words only. This skill is a powerful predictor of future reading success. It is a skill that is typically assessed early in a child's schooling (i.e., kindergarten), but it is also used with older children who are experiencing difficulty reading.	First Sound Fluency (FSF) or Initial Sound Fluency (ISF) Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)	√						
Phonics	Phonics refers to the ability to learn the individual sounds in spoken language and map those sounds to specific written letters in the English language. Students who have strong phonics skills are able to connect individual sounds with letters and use those sounds to read words.	Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)	√	√	√				
Reading Fluency	Reading fluency refers to your child's ability to read text accurately and automatically so that students can understand what they are reading.	Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)		√	√	√	√	√	√
Vocabulary	Vocabulary refers to your child's knowledge of the meanings of individual words he or she reads. Vocabulary knowledge is very important to a student's ability to read and comprehend what is read.								
Reading Comprehension	Reading comprehension refers to your child's ability to understand what he or she reads. It is the ultimate goal of reading instruction.	DIBELS Maze (Daze)				√	√	√	√

Test of Related Early Literacy Skills

	Letter Naming Fluency assesses a student's ability to say the "names" of upper and lowercase letters in the English alphabet. This skill is a strong predictor of future reading success in young children.	Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)	√	√					

dibels.uoregon.edu

Revision Date: Oct-18-2012

APPENDIX B: OBSERVATION TOOL

Date: Grade:			
Time:			
Teacher:			
□ A score of 0 indicates that the dimension was not observed or not applicable during the lesson. □ In the event that it appears to the observer that a teaching component or instructional strategy falls between two numbers, a half score will be used.			
TEACHING COMPONENTS			
Construct 1: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT			
0	1	2	3
Not Observed	Activities and assignments are two grade levels above or below the students' abilities. Lesson has no defined structure, pace is too fast or too slow. Students spend little or no energy attempting to comply with task.	Activities and assignments are appropriate for students' abilities. Instructional groups are productive and at the grade level for the students. Lesson has a clearly defined structure, pace is appropriate. Student is willing to expend effort to complete the task.	Activities and assignments are cognitively engaging for students' abilities. Students take the initiative to influence the formation or adjustment of groups. Lesson allows for reflection and closure, pace is appropriate for all. Students are willing and eager to expend the effort to complete the task.
Construct 2: CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT			
Not Observed	No evident routines or procedures in place. Classroom seems to be disorganized in nature with much direction provided from teacher. Students do not know what to do when…	Routines and procedures are evident, but are not followed by all students. Direction is needed to keep students working when they are not under direct supervision. Students have some knowledge of what to do when…	Routines and procedures are very evident. Little, if any, time is spent on directing students during instructional time. Students are on task when with and away from the teacher. Students have knowledge of what to do when…

Construct 3: COOPERATIVE LEARNING			
Not Observed	Students are working in groups, but there is not a sense of cooperation between group members. Students are working parallel to one another.	Students are working effectively in their group. Some, but not all, members are contributors as evidenced through active participation. Some students are not participating and/or contributing to the group's work.	Students are engaged in learning with and from one another when in small groups. There is a sense of positive interdependence where students understand their importance and the importance of the others to their group's success. All students are contributors and are interacting with other group members to complete the group's work.
OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES OBSERVED:			
ANECDOTAL NOTES:			
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES			
Construct 4: DIFFERING GROUP SIZE			
Whole Group		Small Group Teacher Led	Small Group Independent
Pairs		Independent	Other

Construct 5: BALANCED INSTRUCTION			
Skills Based Instruction □ Ex. Phonemic awareness, alphabetic knowledge, letter sounds association, word work (prefix/base/suffix)		Meaning Based Instruction □ Ex. Vocabulary and comprehension	
Construct 6: EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION			
Not Observed	Teacher instruction is unclear and confusing, with no modeling. Students are not supported when attempting a new strategy.	Teacher provides instruction with modeling, but doesn't provide for a chance for students to try out the skill without penalty. Support by teacher is sporadic when students are trying a new strategy.	Teacher provides clear instruction using modeling, guided practice, and independent practice. An opportunity for students to attempt the new strategy is accompanied by support from the teacher.
Construct 7: CONNECTIONS TO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE			
Not Observed	Connections to prior knowledge happen by accident. Teacher has no set plan to connect new material to previous lessons or experiences.	Teacher provides examples of prior knowledge, but doesn't allow for students to make their own connections.	Teacher's plans and practices cause for connections to prior knowledge to be present in all lessons. Teacher encourages students to make their own connections by providing time for reflection and sharing.
Construct 8: QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES - Academically relevant questions which require thoughtful responses			
Not Observed	Questions are of poor quality with low cognitive demand. Asked in rapid succession without time for reflection.	Questions are varied in type, but not always of high quality. Only some require a thoughtful response. Appropriate wait time.	High quality questioning using multiple levels of questioning (Blooms/DOK). Most require thoughtful response. Appropriate wait time.

Construct 9: COACHING			
Not Observed	Teacher ignores or brushes aside questions. Teacher gives up after limited attempt to help student reach the requested outcome.	Teacher accommodates students' questions or interests. Teacher exhibits limited coaching experience and has an insufficient repertoire of strategies to draw on.	Teacher seizes an opportunity to enhance learning, building on student interests or spontaneous event. Teacher persists in seeking effective approaches for students who need help, using an extensive repertoire of strategies.
Construct 10: EVIDENCE OF GOAL SETTING			
Not Observed	Evidence of either individual or whole class goal setting.	Evidence of both whole class and individual goal setting.	Evidence of both whole class and individual goal setting. These goals are referenced during instruction with a connection between the instruction and goals explained to students.

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Process:

- An appointment will be made with the teacher for 30 minutes.
- The interview will be audio recorded for playback and coding.
- Questions for clarity may be added.
- Explanation of the question should be provided if requested.
- Upon reaching question #5, have a list of each instructional strategy for which specific data is being collected.

Script: This interview is intended to provide me with information about instructional strategies used in your classroom. If you would like more explanation of a question, feel free to ask at any time. If you would prefer to not answer a question, please let me know that as well. For the purpose of this interview, please think about reading instruction and the strategies you use in your classroom on a regular basis. Please remember your answers will not be shared with anyone within the Hessville School District.

1. Describe your class this year?
    a. How many students?
2. How long have you been teaching? In Hessville? Overall?
3. Describe the 90 minute reading block in your classroom.
4. Tell me about goal setting in your classroom.
    a. How are goals set?
    b. Do students know their goals?
    c. Do students know the classroom goals?
    d. How do students know if they are making gains toward their goal?

5. What does effective literacy instruction look like to you? Why?
6. Considering the list of instructional strategies (provide list on a note card each with a definition), which of these do you feel you are most effective using in your classroom? Why do you think this is?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about literacy instruction or are there other questions I should have asked and didn't?

APPENDIX D: HANDOUT WITH SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND DEFINITIONS

Instructional Strategies

- Explicit Instruction – Providing clear instruction using modeling, guided practice, and independent practice
- Making Connections to Prior Knowledge – Connecting current learning with student experiences and prior learning
- Questioning – Academically relevant questions at a variety of cognitive levels
- Balanced Instruction – Skills based and meaning based instruction
- Coaching – Seeking effective approaches for students who need help, using an extensive repertoire of strategies
- Differing Group Size for Instruction – Whole group, small (independent and teacher led, independent, etc.)
- Goal Setting – Writing and using goals with students to encourage them to achieve them

APPENDIX E: CROSSTABULATION STRATEGY

Observation * Strategy * New Years of teaching Crosstabulation

New Years of teaching				Strategy								
				SEO	CMO	CLO	EI	PK	Questioning	Coaching	Goal setting	Total
1-6 years	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	9	7	5	1	4	13	39
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	60.0%	46.7%	33.3%	6.7%	26.7%	86.7%	32.5%
		Observed	Count	15	15	6	8	10	14	11	2	81
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	40.0%	53.3%	66.7%	93.3%	73.3%	13.3%	67.5%
	Total		Count	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	120
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
7-11 years	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	6	3	3	3	5	12	32
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	20.0%	33.3%	80.0%	26.7%
		Observed	Count	15	15	9	12	12	12	10	3	88
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	60.0%	80.0%	80.0%	80.0%	66.7%	20.0%	73.3%
	Total		Count	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	120
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
12-17 years	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	5	6	2	2	3	15	33
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	27.8%	33.3%	11.1%	11.1%	16.7%	83.3%	22.9%
		Observed	Count	18	18	13	12	16	16	15	3	111
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	72.2%	66.7%	88.9%	88.9%	83.3%	16.7%	77.1%

	Total		Count	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	144
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
18 - 37 years	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	3	4	3	4	3	6	23
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	26.7%	20.0%	26.7%	20.0%	40.0%	19.2%
		Observed	Count	15	15	12	11	12	11	12	9	97
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	80.0%	73.3%	80.0%	73.3%	80.0%	60.0%	80.8%
	Total		Count	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	120
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	23	20	13	10	15	46	127
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	36.5%	31.7%	20.6%	15.9%	23.8%	73.0%	25.2%
		Observed	Count	63	63	40	43	50	53	48	17	377
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	63.5%	68.3%	79.4%	84.1%	76.2%	27.0%	74.8%
	Total		Count	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	504
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Observation * Strategy * Teacher Effectiveness Crosstabulation

Teacher Effectiveness				Strategie SEO	CMO	CLO	EI	PK	Questioning	Coaching	Goal setting	Total
effective	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	11	6	5	1	5	19	47
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	45.8%	25.0%	20.8%	4.2%	20.8%	79.2%	24.5%
		Observed	Count	24	24	13	18	19	23	19	5	145
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	54.2%	75.0%	79.2%	95.8%	79.2%	20.8%	75.5%
	Total		Count	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	192
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
highly effective	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	12	14	8	9	10	27	80
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	30.8%	35.9%	20.5%	23.1%	25.6%	69.2%	25.6%
		Observed	Count	39	39	27	25	31	30	29	12	232
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	69.2%	64.1%	79.5%	76.9%	74.4%	30.8%	74.4%
	Total		Count	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	312
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	23	20	13	10	15	46	127
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	36.5%	31.7%	20.6%	15.9%	23.8%	73.0%	25.2%
		Observed	Count	63	63	40	43	50	53	48	17	377
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	63.5%	68.3%	79.4%	84.1%	76.2%	27.0%	74.8%

Total		Count	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	504
		% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Observation * Strategy * Grade Level Crosstabulation

				Strategie								
Grade Level				SEO	CMO	CLO	EI	PK	Questioning	Coaching	Goal setting	Total
primary	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	15	12	8	3	11	30	79
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	41.7%	33.3%	22.2%	8.3%	30.6%	83.3%	27.4%
		Observed	Count	36	36	21	24	28	33	25	6	209
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	58.3%	66.7%	77.8%	91.7%	69.4%	16.7%	72.6%
	Total		Count	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	36	288
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
intermediate	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	8	8	5	7	4	16	48
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	29.6%	29.6%	18.5%	25.9%	14.8%	59.3%	22.2%
		Observed	Count	27	27	19	19	22	20	23	11	168
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	70.4%	70.4%	81.5%	74.1%	85.2%	40.7%	77.8%
	Total		Count	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	216
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	23	20	13	10	15	46	127
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	36.5%	31.7%	20.6%	15.9%	23.8%	73.0%	25.2%

	Observed	Count	63	63	40	43	50	53	48	17	377
		% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	63.5%	68.3%	79.4%	84.1%	76.2%	27.0%	74.8%
Total		Count	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	504
		% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Observation * Strategy * Type of Classroom Crosstabulation

Type of classroom				Strategie								
				SEO	CMO	CLO	EI	PK	Questioning	Coaching	Goal setting	Total
general education	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	6	4	1	2	4	7	24
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	33.3%	8.3%	16.7%	33.3%	58.3%	25.0%
		Observed	Count	12	12	6	8	11	10	8	5	72
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%	66.7%	91.7%	83.3%	66.7%	41.7%	75.0%
	Total		Count	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	96
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
special education	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	7	8	5	5	6	18	49
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	25.9%	29.6%	18.5%	18.5%	22.2%	66.7%	22.7%
		Observed	Count	27	27	20	19	22	22	21	9	167
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	74.1%	70.4%	81.5%	81.5%	77.8%	33.3%	77.3%
	Total		Count	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	27	216
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

ENL	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	8	6	7	2	5	15	43
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	44.4%	33.3%	38.9%	11.1%	27.8%	83.3%	29.9%
		Observed	Count	18	18	10	12	11	16	13	3	101
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	55.6%	66.7%	61.1%	88.9%	72.2%	16.7%	70.1%
	Total		Count	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	144
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
high ability	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	6	11
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%	100.0%	22.9%
		Observed	Count	6	6	4	4	6	5	6	0	37
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	66.7%	66.7%	100.0%	83.3%	100.0%	0.0%	77.1%
	Total		Count	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	48
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Total	Observation	Unobserved	Count	0	0	23	20	13	10	15	46	127
			% within Strategie	0.0%	0.0%	36.5%	31.7%	20.6%	15.9%	23.8%	73.0%	25.2%
		Observed	Count	63	63	40	43	50	53	48	17	377
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	63.5%	68.3%	79.4%	84.1%	76.2%	27.0%	74.8%
	Total		Count	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	63	504
			% within Strategie	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%